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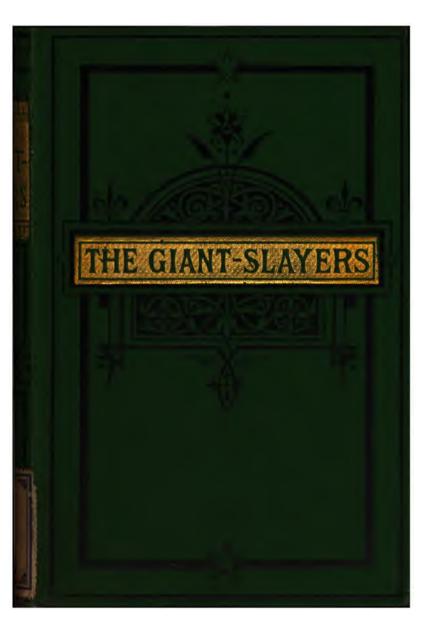
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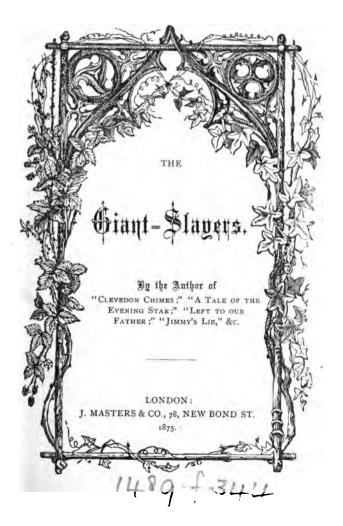
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THE GIANT-SLAYERS.

CHAPTER I.

THE LOAVES AND FISHES.

"I HAVE come to say good-bye to you, little children, before I go away to that far country of which you have so often heard me tell."

The speaker was a young clergyman, and his hearers the members of a Sunday school attached to one of our great London churches.

It was a hot June evening, and every door and window of the pleasant room was open to admit what little air there was. The boys' faces became blank at this announcement, some of the very little girls began to cry, and a young man, (one of the teachers,) walked hastily to an open doorway, ostensibly to repulse a wretched

street child standing in the midst of the golden glow, but really to hide the feeling he knew his face was showing.

"I won't do no harm, if you let me stand here," said the child, "I won't go nigh nobody, I want to hear what he's a-goin' to say."

"Well," replied the young man kindly, "you may come just inside the door and sit here," (he pointed to a bench against the wall as he spoke, with full three yards space between it and the youthful congregation,) "but you must behave very well, and keep quiet, or I shall have to send you away."

The child nodded, then took a seat on the bench as much in the shade as possible.

"I want you to tell me," began the young clergyman, looking earnestly at the eager little faces before him, "if you have been asking God to bless the poor black people and children to whom I am going, and to make them ready to listen to the story I have to tell them about His Son."

From all parts of the schoolroom there came an intelligible murmur, "Yes, yes, we have."

"God loves to listen to the prayers of little children," he continued; "He loves to listen to prayer always; when you have grown to be men and women, you must pray to Him just the same,—ask Him for all you want, food, and clothes, and help, or whatever it may be, and He will send what is needful, and take care of you always, just as He will take care of me among the poor savage black people to whom I am going."

A murmur, this time most unintelligible, rose and fell in the room, while all eyes were turned on a dingy-looking little boy who had made some observation and was ashamed of it.

"What is it?" asked the clergyman kindly; "What does Jimmy Smith say?"

"Please, sir,"—a rosy-faced boy with very short light hair and wide open china-blue eyes rose from one of the back rows of seats to answer the inquiry,—"Please, sir, Jimmy Smith says his father says as how the blacks most like 'll eat you up."

A cry of dismay from some of the little girls, and a sob from poor Jimmy concluded this remark. The rosy-faced boy sat down, feeling (if he could have defined his feelings) not at all popular.

"And if they do," said the clergyman gently, "it will be because the poor creatures will not know any better. When they have heard the

story of the Blessed SAVIOUR, and feel His love in their hearts, as we all do, I hope, they will leave off their wild, savage habits, and live like the followers of Christ. What are you saying, little Mary?"

This was to a fragile-looking child immediately in front of him, a wasted child with intelligence beyond her years shining out of her sunken eyes.

"What did you say, little Mary?" again asked the young man persuasively, to give the timid creature encouragement, for she had two or three times essayed to speak without making her voice audible. At last the words came out with a tremulous shrillness almost painful to hear.

"Please—sir—please,—brother says,—big brother says,—him that works at the factory,—he says as how you didn't ought to go away so far, you was too good, he says, for most like you'd get starved in the desert places, for there ain't no water, nor nothing at all there, and," (here the child's voice became solemn and low,) "it's awful to be hungry, and no food,—awful."

The wretched little mass of rags sitting by the door leant forward with intense earnestness in her keen, bright glance; she echoed the words, "Awful to be hungry, and no food,—awful," in a faint, quivering whisper.

The clergyman looked with much interest on little Mary, and his eyes were dim, and his voice less firm when he spoke again.

"It is very kind of your brother, Mary, to think so much about me, but he must not say I am too good, no one can ever be too good for the Master, Who is Goodness Itself; and as to being starved, do you remember what we read last Sunday about so many poor hungry people who were fed?"

"Yes, sir, oh yes; please read it again."

He opened his Bible at the sixth chapter of S. Mark, and beginning at the thirty-fifth verse, read the miracle of the Loaves and Fishes, laying great emphasis on the concluding verse, "And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men." He closed the Book solemnly, and looked at little Mary.

"Well, Mary," he said cheerfully, "do you think I shall be starved now?"

"Oh, no, I am quite sure not."

"No, indeed," returned the young man; "He Who could feed five thousand people with five loaves and two fishes, can surely find food for me, and He will, I do not fear. We say, 'Give

us this day our daily bread;' and if when we say so, we believe we are going to have it, the good God always sends it. It is no use only saving our prayers, little children, we must really want what we ask for, and then God listens to I in the desert shall say, 'Give us this day our daily bread,' and you in your homes will say it too; Gop's children all over the world say this prayer, and so He feeds us all like a tender father. A Father, little ones, always remember this; your FATHER and my FATHER; Our FATHER: all who love the Merciful God. and His Holy Son, are called His children; children of the Heavenly King; and we are journeying day by day and night by night towards the Pleasant Land which lies beyond the hills of Time. The Pleasant Land is our Fa-THER'S Home, and the Home of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, and of the holy Angels who are always singing and praising GoD; and it is the Home of the blessed Saints who worked for their Master here on earth, as I pray you and I will do, and who went when He called them to rest from their labours; and it is our Home too,—dear little children, we may never meet again in this world, but oh, let us pray, constantly and earnestly, that our precious SaVIOUR in His Infinite Mercy and Love will bring us all to our FATHER'S Home in peace."

Many a little head was bowed very low to hide eyes filled with tears. Then the children all rose and rushed with one accord to surround their beloved teacher. To each in turn he said some loving word of affectionate farewell, and gave a warm lingering clasp of the hand, as one by one with slow heavy steps they took their departure. Then the schoolroom was empty, empty of all but the young clergyman and the ragged child whom he now perceived for the first time.

"Poor little girl," he said kindly, walking up to the door by which she still sat, "did you come in here to rest?—you look very sad and tired."

The child rapidly scanned his face with a quick, sharp glance,—quick and sharp, and even bold it was, but totally devoid of cunning.

"Yes, I am very tired," she answered, "and so hungry, so awful hungry; I'd like some o' them loaves and fishes. Do you think if I was to go and ask your FATHER, as you calls Him, He'd give me any?"

"Yes, I do," replied the young man in a soft, yet assuring voice.

The child immediately sprang to her feet.

"Where does He live?" she asked breathlessly; then a shade came over her countenance, and she sat down again. "But there, it ain't no good," she said gloomily, "I ain't one of His children, as you was talkin' of, and I don't love Him cos I don't know nothint about Him; but I would love some o' them loaves and fishes, I'm so awful hungry."

"Would you like to be one of His children, and learn to love Him?" asked the young man gently.

"I would, sure," answered the girl.

"If you wait here a few minutes," he then said, "I will just go into the next street and fetch you some food."

When he returned and put it into the child's hand, he was quite shocked to see the voracious manner in which she devoured it, more like some wild animal than a human being, tearing the bread and meat asunder with her claw-like hands. When nearly at the end of her repast she stopped suddenly, made the remainder up into a small parcel with the paper in which it had been wrapped, then said to her companion,

"I shall take this to Wild Peggy for her

supper to-night; she said I might sleep on the mat just inside her room door if I stole a bit o' somethin' for her supper, but I'm tired, and it'll save me the trouble o' stealin' if I takes her this."

Deep, tender pity for the wretched child came into the young man's heart at these sad words; it found its way into the tones of his voice when he asked her if she had a mother.

"Don't know, never heard o' none."

"And no father?"

"Not now; he was goin' along the road yesterday morning, and a great waggon from the country went over him and killed him. He was took to the 'orspital, but it wasn't no good, and lor, you should have seen how the man as drove the waggon took on and cried, and he needn't ha' been so sorry, and ha' took on so, for father was a reg'lar wicked man, and knocked me about awful, not like the FATHER as you've been a-talkin' on to-night."

The young clergyman could not speak for a moment or two, he was inexpressibly shocked at the total want of natural feeling conveyed in the girl's speech; was it possible, he asked himself, that among the savage hordes to which he was going as a messenger of glad tidings, he could find human nature at a lower ebb than this?

"My poor child," he said at last kindly, "you must surely be sorry to lose your father in so sudden and awful a manner, even if he were unkind to you sometimes, you must be sorry, I am sure."

"Sorry! I ain't though," answered the child with a convincing nod of her head; "sorry, indeed; you should just see the knocks and kicks he give me, and no food neither; he wouldn't give me nothint, and used to wish I'd die, but I ain't dead, you see, and he is."

The young man shuddered.

"Where do you live?" he asked.

"I don't live nowheres; I runs about; I'm goin' to sleep at Wild Peggy's to-night in Seven Dials; lor, you should see some o' them places, worser places nor Peggy's, I mean; you should go and see 'em and tell 'em your tale about loaves and fishes, and the FATHER as gives 'em; wouldn't the people be wild to get 'em just, they're so awful hungry, them people is, and it ain't so far as them blacks you was a-speaking of, is it?"

Something like a pain shot through the young man's heart at the reproach unwittingly conveyed in these words. He said,

"I will ask some one I know, who is very

kind, to go and see them, and to see you; tell me where you live, or where Wild Peggy lives, and I will send to-morrow."

"Oh, to-morrow I'm off; I'm off to see 'em bury father, or next day after, I don't know which it is, but anyhow you can send to Peggy, she lives in a top room in one of them dark alleys in the Dials;" and then the child entered into a minute description of Peggy's whereabouts, the right time to go, and which turnings to take, all which the clergyman made notes of in his pocket-book.

"Good-night, poor little child," he then said kindly, "take this to get you some breakfast tomorrow morning," (and he gave her a small piece of money,) "and be sure you never steal again, and then perhaps some day I shall see you in the Pleasant Land."

The child's face brightened.

"That place, do you mean, behind them hills as you was a-talking of to-night?"

"Yes."

"If I thought there was a chance o' gettin' there," she remarked determinedly, "I'd never steal no more."

"Then do not steal any more," said the clergyman, "and I am sure I shall see you there." "Well, good night," said the child, after a moment or two's thought; "you've been very kind to me, you have; I never heard nobody speak like you afore; I wouldn't steal nothint from you, remember, nothint at all; eh, but look here," she added, regarding her miserable condition with evident dismay, "in that place behind the hills they won't let me walk about like this, will they,—all dirty and rags?"

"No, certainly not. They will give you a white, shining dress to wear, and wash you in a Stream out of which you will come all clean and bright."

The child's eyes sparkled.

"And the way," she cried eagerly, "the way to this place?"

"My friend shall come and tell you the Way," replied the young man regretfully; "I wish I could stop and tell you now, but I have a long journey before me, and it is already late: goodbye, be sure you meet me in the Pleasant Land."

The child nodded intelligently, then glided rapidly away, her bare feet noiselessly threading the labyrinth of streets that led to Seven Dials.

The young man followed her prayerfully a few

moments, then walked quickly away in an opposite direction.

But it was not his friend who was destined to tell this poor little outcast the Way to the Pleasant Land.



CHAPTER II.

THE SEXTON.

"HULLOA, you there, be off with yer, will yer!"

A sexton was digging a very shallow grave in one of our suburban cemeteries, in the part allotted for the utterly friendless poor.

"Ay, but I shan't be off; I wants to know who that grave's for you're a diggin'?"

"If I tells you, will you go then?"

"May be I will."

"All right," returned the sexton; "then it's for that man as was killed in Oxford Street the day afore yesterday by a waggon; now will you be off?"

"No," said the girl, resolutely, "he's my father, he is; leastways he ain't now, is he?"

The man looked up with his keen, bright eyes, and scrutinised her sharply.

"Don't come none o' them tales over me,"

he said harshly; "if you was his daughter you'd be a-cryin' or feelin' sorry, and you ain't neither, I know."

"No, I ain't," replied the girl, "he can't knock me about any more, and make me steal, I'm a-goin' to leave off stealin'."

The man growled something to himself.

- "That's a callin' that ain't easy left off, young woman," he remarked aloud.
- "Ay, but I am a-goin' to leave it off," said the child; "I'm goin' right away from this to a place called the Pleasant Land."
- "What place?" asked the man, leaning on his spade, as he stopped to listen.
 - "The Pleasant Land," repeated the girl.
 - "Why where's that?" asked the sexton.
 - "Oh, it's somewheres behind them hills."
 - "What hills?"

The inquiry was made in a very incredulous tone.

- "Oh, I don't know," retorted the girl pettishly, "some hills."
 - "And how are you going to get there?"
- "There's some one a-comin' to tell me the way," she replied.
- "Is it over the sea anywheres?" asked the sexton.

The girl reflected a few moments, then she said.

- "I don't know, it's behind them hills."
- "Now look here," said the sexton, who had somehow become interested in the conversation, "don't go a-sittin' on that 'ere grave; the turf's dry enough now,—if you must sit down, sit down there," and he pointed as he spoke to an unused piece of ground just in front of him, where he could see the child without turning round; "but it's all stuff what you're a-tellin' me about that Pleasant Land, I don't believe one word as you says."
- "Then I won't say nothint more," said the child.
 - "Don't," returned the sexton.

But after a silence of some minutes she evidently changed her mind, for looking at the man until she caught his eye she asked in a low voice, (why she spoke low she could not have told,)

"I say, did you ever hear of any one called God?"

The sexton drew back a foot or two from the grave with astonishment.

- "Why, yes, in course," he answered.
- " Who is He?" asked the child abruptly.

The man looked doubtfully at her a moment or two, then returned,

- "Well, He's Gop."
- "And where does He live?" she next asked.
- "Oh, up there," replied the man snappishly, jerking his left hand above his shoulder, "you knows that as well as I do."
- "No, I don't," said the girl, "and you don't neither; you don't know nothint about it, you don't, and if I tells you you won't believe, but I will tell yer; He lives behind them hills I was talkin' of, in the Pleasant Land, and that's where I'm off to," (she rose from the ground as she spoke,) "only I shan't go," she added, as she glanced at the grave, "till that's filled in,—when are you goin' to do it?"
- "To-morrow arternoon, at this time; I s'pose you mean comin'?"

The child nodded.

"And it's really your father as is goin' to be buried here?"

He fixed his keen glance on her again, as he had done at first, and the child met it fearlessly.

- "It really is," she said.
- "And you ain't sorry one bit?"
- "No, not one bit."
- "Then it strikes me," remarked the man with

emphasis, "as you ain't the sort for the Pleasant Land; but there, be off now, I'm a-goin' to lock the gates."

The girl waited to say no more, but ran swiftly out of the cemetery.

"She's an odd un," said the man to himself, as he prepared to leave off work; "I heerd there was some talk at the inquest about a brat of his, the fellow as killed him wanted to find her, and couldn't, and now this little wagrant turns up,—well, we'll see if she comes to-morrow."



CHAPTER III.

THE CARRIER'S HOME.

I was the evening of the day on which according to promise the young clergyman sent his friend to Wild Peggy's abode in Seven Dials; it was also the evening of the day of the inquest.

Over the most exquisite little village eye might wish to see, not more than sixteen miles from town, the June sun was setting with a thousand splendours. Every blade of grass, every clustering hedgerow, every leaf on the huge trees, centuries old, every cottager's homestead, stood out in vivid distinctness in the golden flood.

Patty Somers standing in her rose-covered porch, and shading her eyes with one hand whilst with the other she leant on the chair on which she had been sitting, was looking anxiously down the winding lane where was situated her abode, and which led on to a common where had been erected the small railway station of the village.

"Paul, thou'rt long in coming, lad, long in coming," she half murmured to herself in her own quaint way; for she and Paul had come of a Quaker stock, and though they had long been members of the Church they still preserved much of the early simplicity of their manner.

"Slow and heavy, slow and heavy, poor Paul, thou'rt still sad and low at heart," she continued murmuring as at last her husband came in view, his eyes bent on the ground, his spirits evidently very much depressed.

Then she walked quickly to the gate, and took his hand in hers as they came back silently along the garden path.

"A weary day, Patty, it's been, a weary day," he said when he had sat down in the pleasant kitchen of their home, and his wife was busy getting his tea.

"Ay, lad, weary enough, no doubt; hast heard of the little one?"

Paul shook his head sadly.

"They say," he replied, "she was seen in the crowd that followed the poor soul to the hos-

pital, but no one has heard or seen anything of her since."

"Hast been to her home, Paul?"

"Home, Patty," he repeated with a sad smile, "such poor creatures as she have no home; they run about as wild and untaught as the very heathen; it's a hard thing I've asked of thee, Patty, to take this child to thy hearth, for they say she is bad and wicked, and much given to stealing."

Patty's face became a shade or two paler, but she looked at him steadfastly when she said,

"Dost know if she speaks truth, Paul?"

"Nay, nay," he replied, "I cannot tell thee that, wife; I've told thee all I know, but dost fear to have her, Patty?"

She was silent a few moments, then she said,

"It's plain duty, Paul, to have her; we mustn't strive against duty; thou wast the occasion of her father's death, thou'rt sorry and sick at heart about it, and the best healing for thee'll be to do thy duty."

"There's much truth in what thou say'st, wife," returned Paul; "but somehow there's a wrong sound about that word 'duty,'—it isn't enough; the Good Above when He came to save our souls, didn't come because it was His duty,

He did it like He does everything, out of Love, and we are told to follow Him in all things; it is a plain duty to take this poor child to our home and care, but we must make the duty beautiful, and worthy of the Master, by doing it all in Love."

Patty's nature, though perhaps as sterling in its goodness as her husband's, lacked much of its warmth; she looked but half convinced by his words as she passed him his cup of tea, and sat down to partake of her own; for Patty's code of morals was very strict, and lying and stealing with her were sins of the blackest dve. repulsive to almost every feeling she had to receive into her neat, quiet home this London street-child, but it was plain duty as she had said, and she was resolved not to shrink from any part of it; but to love anything so vile was simply impossible; plain duty would have taken Patty unmurmuring to the stake, but she would not have felt herself called upon to love the flames and smoke that put her to inexpressible torture.

"To-morrow," resumed Paul, "I go to the funeral, "it is my last hope of finding the poor child, but it's a likely one I hope and pray; it may be she'll have a fancy to see the last of her

poor father; at any rate one of the policemen at the inquest to-day promised me he would look out for her."

"Then she will come to-morrow night, Paul, if thou shouldst find her?" asked Patty, rather anxiously.

"Ay, wife, that will she, I trust; and rather late it will most like be, which will be better, I take it, than coming in the light, for thou'lt not like the neighbours to see her before thou'st made her tidy and clean. And now, Patty, if thou'st finished thy tea I think I will close the house, and say our evening prayer, for I am weary, as thou seest, and I must be away betimes in the morning."

When Patty had cleared the table, and placed the Bible and Prayer Book before her husband, he said, in his peculiar quaint way, as he took his place and found the proper lesson for the evening:

"Thou hast a giant to slay, wife, a mighty giant, all the more terrible and mighty because he does not appear before thee as a thief, or a liar, or a murderer, but rather as one who would condemn such erring ones; there must be no half fellowship with it, Patty, thou must slay, and show no mercy."

"I will try, Paul," replied his wife meekly, and with a faint flush on her face, "I have often tried before, and failed."

"David had failed before thee," continued her husband, "had he gone forth to the battle in the armour of King Saul; but only in the Strength of the Living God could the giant of Gath be slain, and David knew it, and in that Strength he slew him."

Patty was silent; her conscience was not at all clear as to *how* she had tried to slay the giant that beset her path; but she had unwavering faith in the truth and excellence of her husband's character, and so sat silent under his rebuke.

"O LORD GOD, David's GOD," prayed Paul at the conclusion of the usual evening prayers, "Thou Who makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice, make them to rejoice indeed to-morrow over Thy wandering lamb, and bring her safely to Thy fold for the Good Shepherd's sake. Amen."

Swifter than an eagle's wing, swifter than any passing thought, Shining Beings bore this prayer upward through the summer sky, past the pale stars, past the Gates of Pearl, the Golden Street, the Crystal Sea, and laid it fragrant with the in-

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cense of faith before the throne of the Eternal: and the city of the King was glad that night, for the prayer had come in an acceptable time, and David's God was resolved to grant it for the sake of the Son of His Love.



CHAPTER IV.

UP IN THE DIALS.

VERY close and hot it was in Wild Peggy's room in the Dials at three o'clock in the afternoon of the day of the funeral. A wretched attic in one of the narrowest and dirtiest courts of this sad region, was the home of the poor creature from whom it would seem at first sight nearly every trace of humanity had departed.

She was sitting on a heap of dirty straw near the broken fireplace, making up into a bundle some boxes of matches and laces, which it was her custom to carry about the streets, where she begged, or stole, or fought, as the occasion served. Her hair was ragged and coarse in texture, and had turned grey in patches, her eyes black, bold, and fierce looking, her mouth hard, thin-lipped, and defiant, with sharp pointed teeth, of such an unnatural dead whiteness, that they gave her more the appearance of some ravenous animal than of a human being. Her harsh, rough skin was darkened almost to gipsy brownness by exposure to all weathers, and her nails were long and hooked, like the talons of a bird of prey. No description could give any idea of the wretchedness of her clothing, nor of her abode, a miserable old mat, and a box being all the furniture the room contained.

Very burning and fierce was the June sun as it poured through the dirty, broken panes of glass of the worn out casement. The vagrant child, sitting on the mat in the only shady corner wondered why Peggy had given her the best place, and was making up her bundle in the blazing, blinding heat. Presently the woman spoke.

"I s'pose you're off to the cemet'ry," she said.

"Yes," replied the child, slowly; and then she added, "and after that I shan't see you no more."

"Eh?" said Peggy, leaving off her work, and something like a wistful look humanising her countenance as she looked at the girl; "shan't see me no more—goin' away anywheres? eh?"

The child nodded; but there was a light in

her eyes that only joy could have brought there. Peggy's sharp glance perceived it, and she remarked,

- "You seems glad."
- "I should just think I am; and so you'd be, if you was goin' to the same place."
- "What place is it?" asked Peggy, curiously.
- "Oh, it's a place where there's a FATHER as gives loaves and fishes, and feeds everybody, and gives you nice clothes, and makes you clean. It's a long way off, I'm thinkin', and it's awful hot, but I means to go. Didn't you never hear of such a place?"
- "Not as I knows on," returned Peggy; "I think I'd ha' been off to it afore this if I had; but p'raps it ain't true. Who told yer?"
- "A gentleman," replied the child; "quite a real gentleman. He spoke so kind, and told me never to steal no more, and I ain't a-goin' to, so you needn't ask me."
- "Ah, them gentlefolks don't often say what's true," remarked Peggy, with an ill-looking smile; "they're as bad at heart as most of us poor, I reckon, but they've fine ways of sayin' their lies, and so people believes 'em."
 - "Ah, but it wasn't lies about loaves and

fishes," retorted the girl with energy, "he read it all out of a book."

- "Books is stuff," remarked Peggy, with cool contempt.
 - "No, they ain't," said the child, sharply.
- "P'r'aps," continued Peggy, with a sneer, "this fine gentleman, or his book, told yer how yer was to get to this place, where they're so fond o' givin' away good things."
- "No, I didn't hear nothint about that," returned the girl, looking sadly down on the ground; "but he said he'd send some one here to tell me the way, or leave word with you; but no one ain't come, I s'pose."
 - "Lor," remarked Peggy, "how funny."
 - "What's funny?" asked the girl.
- "Why, there was some 'un comed last night, before you was back from the cemet'ry; one o' them sort o' men as talks in the churches dressed in white, only he warn't dressed in white when he comed here."
- "And what did he say?" asked the child, eagerly; "do tell me, quick."
- "Lor," replied Peggy, with a wicked glare in her eyes; "I didn't give him no chance of sayin' nothint here,—I'd as lief pitched him down the stairs as looked at him; but I told

him he'd better make off sharp, and quiet, and not come his nonsense over me,—I warn't agoing to stand it; I knows the stuff they talks about, so I takes and slammed the door in his face, and locked it. Now what are you alookin' so vicious like for? he warn't no friend to you nor me. I knows."

"I wish," said the girl, rising from the mat, and coming forward into the scorching sunlight, white and trembling with intense passion, and clasping her hands together so tightly that she almost drove her nails into the flesh, "I wish I had something heavy, and hard, and sharp that I could throw straight at you, and kill you just where you sit; I wish you had never given me no food, and no mat to sleep on, for I hate you now, and if ever I meant to steal again, I'd never steal for you. But I'll find the way to this place somehows yet, and I'll never tell you, —no, never,—for I'm off for good and all, and you shan't see me no more."

So saying, the girl ran blindly from the room, leaving Peggy in the utmost amazement at her strange and sudden anger.



CHAPTER V.

THE CEMETERY.

THE same afternoon, an hour and a half later, the sexton and a policeman might be seen talking together by the side of the shallow grave in the suburban cemetery. The wretched child, weary with her long walk from Seven Dials, saw them as soon as she entered the gates, and hesitated to approach, having a terror of policemen, common to all street wanderers.

The sexton, perceiving her just as quickly, and guessing her reason for not coming nearer, informed his companion of the circumstance, who after a few minutes' further conversation, strolled off in an opposite direction, and soon was lost to sight down a winding path. The child, after having (as she thought) given her natural enemy sufficient time to be clear of the

place, approached the grave very slowly,—not the same spring in her step as yesterday, not the same determination in her eyes and manner, —and then sat listlessly down on the turf without speaking; all which the sexton silently noted.

- "So you've come agin," he said presently.
- "Yes," replied the child; "ain't it late?"
- "Well, it is rayther," answered the man; "but people, you know, don't trouble their-selves for such as this;" and as he spoke he swung his spade towards the grave.
- "You looks sorrier to-day," he continued, after a while, when he found the child remained silent; "may be you ain't so glad he's dead as you was yesterday?"
- "Oh, yes, I am," she replied; "I'm gladder. I wish everybody was dead too, and I was goin' to see 'em buried."
- "And then you'd be off to that fine place you was a-speakin' on, I s'pose?"

The child's countenance fell lower than ever.

- "I ain't a-goin' now," she said, sadly.
- "Oh, ain't a-goin' now: you finds the stealin' pays best, I s'pose?"
- "I haven't been a-stealin'," retorted the child, angrily; "I never mean to steal no more,

becos him as told me about the Pleasant Land said if I didn't steal he'd be sure to see me there, and he knowed all about it, I guess; so if I can't find my way just yet, I ain't a-goin' to lose any chance just through stealing."

"I thought as you said," remarked the man, "some un was comin' to tell ver the way?"

"Some un did come," replied the girl, "but she drove him away."

"Who's she?"

"Oh, nobody as you knows," said the child, sharply; "you wants to know a deal too much."

"Now look here," said the sexton, folding his arms, and leaning on his spade, "s'pose I was to tell you of a fine place to go to, not so far off as your'n, and easy to get at,—now s'pose?"

"Well?" said the girl.

"Well: would you go?"

The child hesitated. "Should I see him as told me about the Pleasant Land there?" she asked, softly.

"Can't say; dessay you might see as good. But look, now, here comes the funril; just you bide quiet till it's over, and then I'll tell yer summut more."

The rude coffin, supported by four men, now approached from the small chapel of the ceme-

tery, preceded by a clergyman, and followed by one mourner, and a few stray loiterers from the streets. The short impressive service was soon over, and the sexton commenced rapidly to fill in the grave; but after two or three minutes' work he threw aside his spade, and joined the clergyman and Paul Somers, (for he was the solitary mourner,) who were in close conversation a few yards off.

"You're p'r'aps lookin' for the child, sir," he said, addressing the gentleman, "as was spoke about at the inquest yesterday?"

"This excellent person is," replied the clergyman, "and I am most anxious to assist him in his search; can you give us any information?"

"I've had my eye on her since yesterday, sir," returned the sexton; "that's the child, sitting over you on the turf, sir."

Paul looked eagerly in the direction indicated by the man, his face aglow with benevolence, softened by compassion, which increased rather than abated when he beheld the mass of rags and wretchedness, as he believed, appealing silently and helplessly to every human and Christian impulse of his nature.

"We will go and speak to the poor child," said the clergyman; and as he spoke he walked

towards her, followed by the sexton and Paul, which she no sooner perceived than, apprehending some rebuff, she sprang from the ground, and was about to run off, when a strong hand from behind detained her, and held her firmly by the shoulder. Turning quickly, she beheld the dreaded policeman, who had been watching her from behind a tall gravestone.

"Oh, let me go—let me go—pray do," she called out in terror, vainly struggling to release herself from the strong grasp of her detainer. "I only come to see 'em bury father,—I wasn't going to do no harm. Oh, you wicked old man," she added, fiercely, her eyes suddenly falling on the sexton, "you wants to send me to prison, you do; that's the fine place so easy to get at as you meant; and I ain't been stealin' nor doin' nothin' bad, only trying to get to the Pleasant Land, and there ain't no one to tell me the way."

"Now don't talk so spiteful," said the sexton, "I've been trying to be kind to you, I have; I've been a-telling of this clergyman about you, and he ain't a-goin' to send you to prison, I knows. P'r'aps if you was to ask him he'd know about them hills you was a-talkin' on, and the place as is behind 'em."

"What hills are they, my child?" said the clergyman, coming close to her, and regarding her with much interest.

A vague hope flitted into the poor little outcast's mind, that all was not quite lost—that she might yet learn her way to the Pleasant Land.

"Oh," she said, eagerly, pushing away and holding back from her face her heavy, brown hair, and fixing her bright, dark grey eyes entreatingly on the clergyman's countenance; "oh, if you could only tell me where them hills is; hills—hills,—" she repeated, as though endeavouring to recollect something; "hills of Time, I think he called 'em, and there's a place behind 'em where a Father lives, such a good Father, not such as him," and she pointed with contempt to the partly filled up grave. "People goes there as is tired, and ain't got no food, and the Father gives 'em loaves and fishes. It's called the Pleasant Land, the place behind them hills is; do you know the way there?"

"Yes, I do," replied the clergyman, with great feeling.

"There now, I told yer so," said the sexton, deprecatingly.

"Is it far,—is it a long way?" asked the child, in a low tone, as though she feared the answer.

"To some people it is a long way, to others very short," replied the clergyman; "but the FATHER is good, the Way is never too long."

"Is it soft like this?" she asked, pointing to the yielding turf, "or hot and dry like the roads outside?"

"It is like this and the roads too," was the reply: "and sometimes there are heavy burdens-weights, you know-to be carried, but if we talk to the FATHER whilst we are carrying them, and look straight forward to His Home beyond the hills, they turn into shining crowns to be worn for ever and ever. There are thorns too on the way, likely to wound our hands and feet very much, and sharp, cutting stones, that are very painful, but if we walk straight on, and never get angry with the FATHER because we are bleeding and weary, the thorns will all turn into beautiful flowers some day, and the stones into jewels for the shining crowns, and then the FATHER will call us His children, and take us to live with Him for ever. Do you think now you would like to go?"

"Oh, yes," said the child, "I would do anything—anything to get to the Pleasant Land."

"Who told you about it?" asked the clergy-

"A gentleman at some place where little children goes with books; they let me go inside to rest one night, and I heard him a-talkin', and he gived me some food, and he was a-goin' away to tell some black people about the Pleasant Land, and he said as he'd send some un to show me the way there, and so he did, but Peggy, she as has let me sleep on her mat sometimes, drove him away; but now p'r'aps you'll tell me, 'cos I still wants to go."

"You shall know all about it, my child, I promise you," said the clergyman kindly, "but now I want you to tell me if your father was 'the poor man we have just buried?"

- "Yes," replied the child.
- "How did he die?" asked the clergyman.
- "He was killed the day before yesterday, quite early in the morning by a waggon."
 - "Where?"
- "In Oxford Street; he'd been drinkin' hard, and threw hisself in the way of the waggon, and afore the man as drove could stop it, the wheels went over father and crushed him dead."
 - "Did you see all this?"
- "Yes, I was a-runnin' after father, and beggin' for a penny to buy a bit o' bread with, but he only swore dreadful at me, and said he'd

never give me nothin' more, and he was killed d'rectly after, so he hadn't no chance."

The clergyman looked deeply pained, but thought it wiser to make no remark on her want of feeling respecting her father's death; so he said, directing the girl's attention towards Paul,

. "Do you remember ever to have seen this person?"

The child, who had not hitherto looked at any one but her interlocutor, now scanned Paul narrowly, but only for a few moments.

"He's the man," she said, "as took on so, and cried, and went to the 'orspital after father; he's the man as drove the waggon."

Paul looked delighted.

- "Have you a mother?" asked the clergy-man.
- "No; I ain't got no one, and I don't belong to nobody."
 - "Would you like to belong to anybody?"
- "I'd like to belong to that there FATHER in the Pleasant Land."
- "She's been telling you quite true, sir," said the policeman, who thought the right time had come for him to speak; he still kept his hold of the child though his grasp was lighter, "I've

known all about him," pointing towards the grave, "for some months past; he was altogether bad; the child has lived in the streets somehow, but at any rate she was his child."

"Yes," replied the clergyman, "I am quite satisfied it is so; are you?" he asked, turning to Paul.

"Yes, sir, quite; will the little one like to come with me, I wonder."

"This most worthy and excellent person," said the clergyman, addressing the poor outcast, "wishes to take you to live in his home; he has no little children, and he wants you to be his daughter; I am sure you will be glad to go."

The girl looked her astonishment; she did not speak.

"Thou shalt be loved and cared for," said Paul, with a trembling voice; "thou shalt have a mother and father, and food to eat, and clothes to wear, and I'll show thee the way to the Pleasant Land;—wilt go with me?"

The child glanced down at her bare travelworn feet, at her wretched clothing, then looked up wistfully into Paul's face.

"Thou wilt, I see thou wilt," he said, a smile of gladness lighting up all his countenance; "I am grieved, sore grieved to have killed thy poor father," he added in a sadder tone, "but God is good to let me find thee, yea, verily our God is good."

"I hopes," said the sexton, as Paul slipped something into his hand, and thanked him warmly for the great assistance he had rendered, "I hopes as some day you'll teach her to speak more decent like of her dead father as is buried here, and not to say as she ain't sorry one bit like the hanimals; and I hope the next grave as she sees dug, or the next funril she goes to she'll cry and look proper, and not say spiteful things of her best frinds," and he shook his head ominously at the child who was now released from the policeman's grasp, and was standing by the side of Paul who held her hand.

"May God bless you both," said the clergyman warmly; "you especially," he continued, particularly addressing Paul, "for yours is a holy and blessed work, the 'pure religion' of which S. James speaks; by God's gracious help you have plucked this brand from the burning, may it prove to be from the Everlasting Burning."

Then he cordially shook his hand, and after a few words with the policeman, they separated, and went their several ways, except the old sexton, who remained to complete his work.



CHAPTER VI.

THE JOURNEY HOME.

PERHAPS all through her life the little outcast remembered her journey home in Paul's heavily-laden cart; for he was a carrier, and three times a week wended his way to London.

Owing to his having attended the funeral he was full three hours later than usual before he started, and they had not proceeded far on their way before the sun set, and the calm June twilight gradually crept around.

Every now and then the child peered round from the comfortable seat Paul had made her in the cart, to take a look at the great city already dim and indistinct in the distance. Each time her companion noticed a gleam of satisfaction stole over her face.

They had hardly spoken since they left Lon-

don, everything about them conduced to silence,—the air laden with the sweet scent of the hay, the scarcely-heard rustle of the heavily-foliaged trees, the notes of some distant bird, few and far between, the dull, measured plodding of the stout, strong horse that drew them,—but suddenly the child leant forward, a strange light shone in her eyes, her lips were parted for a few minutes before she spoke, so earnest was her gaze.

"Look—look there," she at last said, pointing with her thin hand to the low Surrey Downs; "look,—what's them risin' up out of the ground all over there?"

"They're hills," said Paul cheerfully; "we country folk are very fond of our hills."

"Hills!" repeated the child, the light in her eyes becoming still brighter; then she leant forward till her face almost touched Paul's, and said in a whisper, "Are they them hills?"

Paul had to think a minute or two before he could reply, but the conversation of the afternoon quickly dawned upon him.

"No," he said, rather sadly, "but they're very beautiful hills; I believe God gives them to us to make us think of *His* hills, the hills before His Home, thou knowest."

The child sighed wearily.

"I'm sorry," she said; "I did think they was them hills."

There was another long silence after this, but it was again broken by the child.

"Are you going to the Pleasant Land?" she asked.

"I trust so," replied Paul humbly; "I toil day and night to get there; still all my trying wouldn't be of any use in itself; the good FATHER knows how helpless we are, and His Holy Son knows it too, and it is of Their Love and Goodness alone that we ever get there."

"Then what's the use o' tryin' so much?" remarked the girl.

"Why," said Paul, "the FATHER doesn't like seeing His children idle, He's never idle Himself, nor His Son either, and if we really love such a good FATHER, we shall always want to be doing something for Him."

"Do you think I could do anything for Him?" asked the child.

"Thou canst indeed," replied her companion, "thou canst learn to be a good girl, and tell the truth, and leave off stealing; when thou dost all this thou wilt please the Good Saviour much."

- "The Good Saviour?—Who's He?" asked the girl.
- "God's most Holy Son; He's the same as God, thou knowest; at least thou wilt know some day; it's a wonderful tale I have to tell thee about the Blessed Christ."
- "There was a book," remarked the child after a few moments; "a book as the gentleman read out of to the little children; do you know what that book's called?"
 - "What did he read about?" asked Paul.
- "About some un, I've forgot His name, as fed ever so many people with loaves and fishes."
- "Ah, that's a Precious Book," exclaimed Paul, "that's God's Own Book; we call it the Bible; may be thou'st never heard of it?"

The child shook her head.

- "Ah, sad, sad," he murmured; then he added, "JESUS was the Name of Him Who fed the poor people; dost remember now?"
- "Oh, yes, that was the name, and He lives in the Pleasant Land too, don't He?"
- "He doth indeed; but once He lived in the world just as we do; I should better say, as thou hast done, for He had no home, no food, no friends; He hath been hungry like thee, and

thirsty too, and so He hath felt for thee in thy sad life, and hath given thee a home; and all He wants thee to do in return is to love Him with all thy heart. What is thy name, child?"

"I haven't no name," was the reply; "I don't want to say vhat they called me up in the Dials, cos it's about my bein' such a thief; I want to forget all about everything like that."

"It glads me," said Paul, "to hear thee talk like this, but art thou *sure* thou hast no right name?"

"Yes, I'm sure; once father made me steal somethin' along o' him, and a p'liceman took us and locked us up, and then we were taken before the judge and a lot o' people, and the judge, he asked father what my name was, and father said as I hadn't got no name, and the judge, he said as father should ha' took me to the Church, and have had a name give to me, but father only laughed when he got outside, and said he shouldn't do no such stuff."

Paul reflected a few moments, then he asked, "How old art thou, child?"

"Going on for twelve year old, I've heard Wild Peggy say."

"Who is she?" asked Paul.

"A wicked, bad, old woman up in the Dials,"

said the girl, with what almost seemed vindictive energy; "she as sent the gentleman away who come to tell me the way to the Pleasant Land."

"Oh," said Paul, "and thou art angry with her?"

The child looked straight before her, and nodded.

"And yet," continued Paul, "I thought I heard thee say this afternoon that sometimes she had let thee sleep on her mat?"

"Yes, often, when it rained or snowed."

"Did she ever give thee food?"

"Yes, sometimes."

"And thou art still angry with her when thou thinkest of all this?"

The child's head drooped, she did not answer, and they both relapsed into silence.

On and on the strong horse plodded through the beautiful land, over wild commons and heathy downs, by wooded slopes and pleasant farms, with faint, trembling stars peeping out here and there in the summer sky, and the moon shining high and clear above them.

"Are we nearly there?" at last asked the child.

"Almost," replied Paul; "dost see you light among the trees?"

[&]quot;Yes."

"That's my home," said he, "and thine too; the LORD has heard my prayer, His Holy Name be praised."

A few yards further, and the cart stopped at the gate of his cottage.

The greatest difficulty in all Paul's undertaking was now to be met, for he well knew how much of future happiness or discomfort depended on the mutual like or dislike of Patty and the child. The door softly opened, and his wife came slowly down to the gate, slowly because she knew her husband was not alone, she had heard the two voices as they came down the lane.

Paul lifted the child from the cart, and before putting his horse up for the night, took her hand in his and led her into the house.

Patty did not speak when she first beheld the utter destitution of the half-starved girl; perhaps it was as well she did not. Strong repugnance was struggling hard with duty in her soul, and she knew it was wiser not to speak if she wished duty to be conqueror.

"The Dear God hath answered my prayer, thou seest, wife," said Paul, when after a few moments he perceived the good in Patty's nature was winning the battle.

"He is good and just," half murmured Patty, for the struggle was not yet over; "He doeth all things well."

"He is full of compassion, and mercy, and love," added Paul gently; "He turneth Him unto the prayer of the poor destitute, and despiseth not their desire; and now, wife, I will go and put the horse and cart away, and then we will take our supper, for the journey was long, and we are hungry."

He closed the door and went out; the woman and child were left alone, and the silence became painful. At last Patty rose to place the meat and bread on the table; the child made a gesture as she did so, as if to stop her.

"I'm all dirty and rags," she said, "and you don't like to see it; I don't seem right in a tidy, clean place like this. If you opens another door and lets me go out, I'll make off easy and sharp while he's out of the way; he won't know as you opened the door, and he shan't never find me, I'll promise that; you'll do it, won't you? cos I ain't what you likes, I know."

But Patty did not open the door; she was grieved and ashamed that the child had so well divined her thoughts, and was also much struck with the openness of her manner.

"Nay, nay," she said, though not without some difficulty; "thou must not go, thou must bide here, and we will do our duty by thee; thou shalt not have cause to reproach the LORD's people; thou shalt be washed and made tidy and neat, and we will teach thee to leave off thy evil ways, and to do thy duty; I have water here and soap," she added, walking into the outer kitchen, "wash thy face and thy hands, and come and eat thy supper, thou must be hungry."

The girl silently obeyed; there was something in the quiet, calm manner peculiar to Patty that instinctively commanded respect and obedience. She would still run away, she thought, but not to-night now, it was so late, and she was so hungry, and she would like to see Paul just once again.

"I wonder if she loves the FATHER like he does," said the child to herself, as she rubbed away at her face and hands; "I wonder if she can talk beautiful like he can about them as lives behind the hills."

But Paul had returned by this time, and when the child was quite ready they all sat down to supper. The meal was passed almost in silence, the two travellers being very hungry. It was not until the cloth was cleared and prayers had been said that any sort of conversation took place.

- "Was you talkin' to the FATHER just now?" the girl asked curiously.
 - "Yes," replied Paul.
- "And you told Him all about me, didn't you?"
 - "Yes."
- "How can He hear you such a long way off? you didn't call out loud."
- "No; but God can always hear; He comes very close to us when we pray, when we talk to Him, thou knowest."
- "Did you ever see Him?" This was asked in a very low tone, but it rather shocked Patty.
- "No," replied Paul seriously; "no one can see Him, but He can see us, and He knows all our thoughts, my thoughts and thy thoughts," (the child started,) "He knows everything."
- "And when people do wrong," added Patty, who thought it wise and right that she should give a few wholesome words of admonition; "He is very angry with them indeed, and punishes them very much; I will read to thee sometimes how the LORD punished the unrighteous people."

The child looked frightened; the idea of the Invisible God Who, as Paul had just said, knew her very thoughts, being angry with her, and punishing her, was far worse in her imagination than anything she had ever gone through.

Paul saw this, and endeavoured to comfort her.

"And she will also read to thee," he said softly, "how the Gentle Saviour loved the little children, and took them in His Arms and blessed them; and how, when people were sorry for all they'd done wrong, He forgave them, and loved them, oh, so well, so wonderfully well, that when they were all so wicked that they could never have gone to their Father's Home, He died a cruel death to save them, and to make the way easier. But now, child, thou art very tired; go to bed, and sleep well in thy new home, and may the LORD bless thy coming to us, and us to thee."

Then Patty, taking a candle, led the way to the room that had been prepared for the little stranger.

"I wish I was quite good," said the child when they reached it, "and not so dirty and ragged; then, may be, you'd like me, but I don't see how you can now."

The words smote on Patty's conscience.

"Thou'lt be better some day," she said; "it's hard for all of us to-night, the LORD sends these hard things to make us see, and do our duty; I will do mine by thee, thou shalt have clothes to wear to-morrow, and thy hair must be cut and neatly plaited away, and thy dress must be black, because thy father is dead,—thou shalt be cared for, and also taught to work; I will not fail in my duty to thee;" and then wishing the child good-night she left her to her own thoughts, which ran much in this way:

"She talks a deal about duty, I wonder what it is; and he don't say nothin' about it, but it's nice to hear him talk, and I don't think I'll run away, but somehows I wish it was the Pleasant Land."



CHAPTER VII.

GIANTS TO SLAY.

FEW days later, and the rags, and dirt, and wretchedness of the London street child had all disappeared. She was now decently clothed in a plain black dress, and neat holland apron; her hair had been cut, and smoothed. and plaited away, and her feet were feeling very uncomfortable in the good stockings and boots provided for her by Patty. For it would be quite a mistake to suppose that the child was happy in her sudden transition from abject want to comparative ease; it would have been against nature had she felt so; her life had been so recklessly free, and the restraint here was irksome; she had hitherto owed and shown obedience to none, but Patty's precise, orderly manner commanded obedience, and the child. struck mute, as it were, by the strangeness of all

around her, silently obeyed. Only out in the meadows with Paul was her tongue loosed, only to him could she speak of the Land that now seemed to her very far away, the Pleasant Country beyond the Hills; for Patty had been true to her word, and had read to her out of the Bible the awful history of Ananias and Sapphira, and the child, terror-stricken, had cried to her to put the Book away, and read out of It no more.

"It's God's Book," she said, "and I am a wicked child, and He knows I've told lies, cos they made me, and some day He'll kill me like that, and I shan't get to the Pleasar." Land."

But when Paul one evening, with her hand in his, strolled through the rich, grassy meadows and explained to her clearly and minutely all the sad circumstances relating to the dire judgment which fell on the erring husband and wife, the terror partly faded away,—not the wholesome terror, that would have been far from Paul's object,—but the terror which would have narrowed the view he wished her to take of the wise acts and judgments of an All-Wise God,—which would have cramped the buds of promise he believed were already springing up within her, which would have made her regard the

FATHER of All Good rather as a revengeful persecutor than a God of Infinite Mercy, and Goodness, and Love. Then he read to her of the long-suffering, and meekness, and patience of the Holy Christ, and how He would forgive the greatest of sinners if they would only turn to Him and repent; "for thou must know," continued Paul, "it's not enough only to be sorry when we do wrong. S. Peter, as I have been reading to thee, was very sorry, and wept exceeding bitterly, but he did not stop there, he worked all the rest of his life for the dear Master he loved, and died a death of agony rather than deny Him again."

"Do you mean," asked the child, "as it ain't no use for me to be sorry as I've stole, and told lies, and said bad words, if I means to do it all again when a chance comes,—don't you mean as I ought to leave everything bad right clean off?"

"Yes," replied Paul, "that's exactly what I do mean; but thou wilt be tempted sore, my poor child,—not to steal, perhaps, for thou hast plenty to eat and drink now, thank the LORD; nor to use bad words, by the grace of God that is a habit easily to be conquered; but the temptation to lie will cling to thee all thy life. Thou

hast heard of the Evil One, the Devil we call him: he was an angel once, and lived in the Pleasant Land with GoD a very long time ago, before this world we live in was made. But he was proud and rebellious, and he made other angels the same, and they rose and fought against the King of Heaven, the Almighty God, thou knowest, and sad to tell thee, there was war in Heaven. But God. Who can do all things, conquered in the battle, and cast down the bad angels with the Devil, their leader, into the Great Burning Lake we call Hell, and they can never go back again to the Pleasant Land that was once their Home. The Evil One hates God most bitterly, and tries all he can to make people wicked, so that they may go and live with him in the Burning Lake, and he wins them most by making them tell lies,—he is the father of lies. Ofttimes he tempts people who love God very dearly to deceive themselves. tempts them to tell God they're very sorry for some wrong thing they've done, and if they just looked close into their heart they'd find they weren't so very sorry, not so sorry as they ought to be; but people don't often look close into their heart, and so they deceive themselves, and to deceive is the same as telling lies, and God, Who is all Truth, sees no difference. What is not perfectly true must be a lie with Him, and the Devil knows this, and so keeps close to us till the very last moment of our lives, to lose no chance of making us his own; but the Righteous One, the Saviour, keeps close too, and if we are faithful to Him He will be faithful to us, and save us, and take us to His Home, where the Evil One can never come near us any more."

The child sighed. "I wish that time was come," she said, "it's awful to think of always fightin' agin that Devil; father used to say a deal about him, and often told me to go to him, and never come back no more. But I don't mean to go to him, I mean to go to GoD; at least," she added, in a more subdued tone, "if He will let me, and help me to go."

"Thou'rt right to say that," answered Paul, "thou canst do nothing without the LORD; but with Him, thou canst do all things. With Him thou canst slay the two other great enemies,—giants, I call them,—that will beset thy path: they are called the World and the Flesh. To one person the Devil seems the strongest giant, to another the World, to another the Flesh; sometimes we are attacked by all three at once.

We cannot conquer them in our own strength, not even if they come singly. We must call loudly to the Living God; I mean with a strong great longing when I say loudly,—the voice of the heart, thou knowest. We must say, 'O LORD, haste Thee to help me,' and He will haste, and the giants will be confounded, and flee from before us."

"What do you mean by the World?" asked the child, who was naturally acute, and already understood in a great measure Paul's peculiar way of speaking of religion.

"Sometimes," replied he, "when people have a great deal of money, they learn to love it and the pleasure it can give them more than God; and by so doing they break one of His greatest commandments, 'Thou shalt have none other gods but Me.' They would be very angry if they were told they did not worship God, because many of them go to church every Sunday, and think those who do not go are quite wicked; but these people are under the dominion of the giant called the World. He is a very pleasant giant, he does not tell people to murder, and lie, and cheat, and steal, as the Devil does; he looks very shocked when he hears of or sees such things, but the path by which he takes his

poor victims leads just as surely to the Burning Lake,-the dreadful Hell of which I have told thee. Yet thou must not think, child, that all rich people love the World. God knows how very hard it is for them to come to Him, and if they only ask Him, He helps them all He can; and also, thou must not think that it is only rich people who follow the giant World; such as thou and I follow it quite as much, though in a different way. We wonder what people say about us; we are anxious they should think we are respectable, and well-dressed, and well-to-do. and we forget altogether what GoD is thinking Thou wilt follow the giant World if thou learnest to love thy new home more than the Pleasant Land, and Patty and me more than the FATHER in Heaven. But after all," continued Paul, leaning against the broad trunk of an oak tree with folded arms, and a far-off look in his thoughtful eyes, "after all, I don't think there is a greater giant to battle with than the giant called Flesh. Thou must know, child, that the giant called Flesh is our very own selves, so thou seest it is a giant we can never get away from. The Devil ofttimes will leave us for a season, like he did Our Blessed LORD, which I will read to thee some day. And the

World may forsake us, or we may get tired of the World when we come to find how false it is. But the wants and wishes of the giant Flesh are always with us, always clamouring to be heard. always warring against the Spirit. We like our own way, and our way is not God's Way. We desire to eat of forbidden fruit, as did Adam and Eve, which I read to thee this morning. What I mean is, we seek often to have what God has not given us, and sometimes we will have it; we will go into wicked company, or we will think much of the beauty of our poor weak bodies, that God can crush in a moment, if He likes, or spoil by wasting sickness; or we will be too fond of eating and drinking till we have nothing to spare to give to the poor, starving people. But I could never tell thee the thousand ways this giant Flesh has to tempt God's children to the Burning Lake; day by day thou wilt learn them for thyself. Yet thou must ever remember that all these giants can be slain. and if thou dost really desire to reach the Pleasant Land, thou must slay them all without any mercy, not in thine own way, nor in thine own might, but in the Strength of the Living God,"

The child was very quiet; Paul's impressive manner, and his still more impressive words.

were making way in her little heathen heart. They resumed their walk silently at first, but after a time Paul said,

"In a few days, when I have read more to thee about the Blessed Christ, and the Merciful God, and told thee what They would have thee do to get to the Pleasant Land, I shall take thee to the Church and have thee baptized, that is, a name will be given thee by which Christ will know thee when He gathers in His own; and our Heavenly Father will then receive thee as His child, and the Lord Jesus Christ will be thine Elder Brother, and the Holy Spirit of the Father and the Son will come into thy heart, and thou wilt be a Christian,—one of God's family here on earth. Thou must think and tell me what name thou wouldst like to have."

They had just reached home as Paul concluded speaking, so there was no time for further conversation that night, as he would have to be up betimes the next morning for his journey to London, and they must go to rest early. But long did the little stranger lie awake in her bed, thinking of the name she should choose by which her SAVIOUR would know her, by which she would be called when treading the streets

of the Pleasant Land, with angels for friends, and God for her Father, by which she would be known as the slayer of the mighty giants whose everlasting portion was in the Burning Lake.



CHAPTER VIII.

THE RECTOR'S VISIT.

I T was the next afternoon, and Patty and her adopted child were sitting in the rose-covered porch of the cottage, the former teaching the latter to sew.

From the distant farm-lands the pleasant lowing of cattle could now and then be heard, the swallows in the eaves faintly twittered, the bees hummed lazily through the summer air, whilst high above in the blue sky the beneficent sun at the bidding of the Master was sending forth heat to ripen the grain so rich and clustering in the fields below.

Patty had become a little more reconciled to her charge; she did not find her the annoyance she expected, but on the contrary quick and helpful; besides, her woman's nature had been in a measure gratified by buying and planning new clothes and necessaries for the destitute child.

It was rather pleasant to sit in that shady porch, and reflect that only a week or two since the neat, respectable looking girl before her was clothed in rags, her body utterly neglected, her soul uncared for, her future something too terrible to think about, and now she had home and friends, and food, and clothes; and she was grateful too, Patty thought, and perhaps after all might not bring discredit on the LORD's people.

"I'd like her to be honest, and upright, and truthful, and modest as a maiden should be," said Patty within her heart; "and I'd like people to say we had set her a good example, and had done our duty by her."

Thus perfectly self-complacent she thought it would be as well to ask what the child was thinking about, and if her thoughts in any way reflected her own.

The answer startled her, it struck on chords in her soul that jarred, they had so long been tuneless, and yet until this moment she had believed them to be in perfect harmony.

There was a hideous giant in Patty's path which crushed down many wonderful flowers that

would have grown there but for him; this giant could present himself in different forms, and had many names,—one was Spiritual Pride.

"I was thinking," replied the child, in answer to Patty's question, "how good the Father must be to want me to be His child,—a wicked, bad girl like me, who's been took to gaol, and never seen nothint good till I come here, and He can have angels for His children; He can't want me at all, you know, there's thousands of others He could have; and if I was to work for Him for years and years, He could do just as well without my work, because of course I'm nobody, but it seems like as if He knows as I wants to go to the Pleasant Land, and He says, 'I'll help her, and I'll love her, and I'll have her for My child.'"

It was the absence of all self-assertion in this reply, and the pure, deep-rooted humility conveyed in every word of it, that vibrated so startlingly on Patty's soul.

"Humility is the great ornament and jewel of Christian religion," an eminent Father of the Church once wrote; and Paul, who loved his writings, had often told this to Patty, with an unceasing prayer in his heart that some day she Bp. Jeremy Taylor. Holy Living. Chap. II. Sect. IV.

might possess it; but here to her utter astonishment was a child whom she regarded as a heathen, unknowingly possessing a treasure in which she, a Christian woman for many years, had no part or lot.

"Art thou glad to have learnt about the Righteous God?" she asked after a little time, still feeling inwardly very uncomfortable.

"Oh, yes, I wish I'd heard of Him'a long time ago, before I stole or said bad words, most like I shouldn't ha' been so wicked then; and I've been thinkin' all day as father might ha' been good and kind to me, instead of cruel and bad, if he'd known about the Pleasant Land, and the Saviour dying to save wicked people; but he didn't know nothing about what God does, only about the Devil; I said the other day I was glad he was dead, because he couldn't hurt me no more, but I'm very sorry now; I wish he'd come back just for a little while to hear what a good Father there is in Heaven."

"I am glad," responded Patty, "that thou hast come at last to a right way of thinking about thy father's death; it shocked me much the other night to hear thee tell neighbour Gray thou wast glad he was gone; but neighbour

Gray is discreet, she will not mention it among the LORD's people; for the talking of such, thou must know, is always of a godly sort, we eschew all evil among us, and even the mention of it, unless it be to warn one another to shun an unrighteous person; therefore I would have thee careful in what thou sayest, so that shame may not come upon us for thy sake."

There was a flush on Patty's face, as she finished speaking, her conscience was ill at ease about the giant that beset her path; she felt she had had an opportunity of repulsing him, and had lost it; should she try to unsay her words? to soften them a little? A sharp struggle began within her, and in the midst of it the latch of the little gate was lifted, and the Rector came slowly down the garden path; she had begun her battle with the giant too late, and with a pang of regret she put it off till another time.

"So this is the little stranger, Mrs. Somers," said the clergyman kindly, when Patty had made her courtesy, and found him a seat, "that you and your husband have taken to your home?"

"Yes, sir; we have made her tidy and clean, and Paul is teaching her her letters, and we

both read to her, and tell her of the Great and Just God, and when thou art satisfied that she knows enough and understands rightly, we shall bring her to the Church to be baptized."

"That is well," replied the Rector, "I had a long talk with your husband this morning; he called at my house for some parcels; he seemed to think it might not be very long before we give this little one a Christian name."

"I hope not, sir," returned Patty, "for it troubles me much that one unbaptized should be a dweller in my home; it gives occasion for much talk among the Lord's people, who cannot see why Paul should have brought home a heathen child, and one who has wandered so far in the paths of sin—" but here Patty broke off abruptly, for the Rector was looking very grave, nay, more than grave, severe.

"The LORD's people, Mrs. Somers," he said, "must know very little of their LORD's teaching if such is their talk; He came to seek and to save that which was lost, and we are told to follow His example in all things; so your husband endeavoured to seek and to save this poor little child lost in the great and evil world; many a priest, and many a Levite, may be, have passed her by on the other side, but the Sa-

maritan came at last in Paul. If you look into your Bible you will find that when our SAVIOUR speaks of him who fell among thieves. He calls him 'a certain man :' we are not told the country of which he was a native, nor his calling, nor his religion, if he had any, and it is possible he had not. The Samaritan on coming to him only sees the bare need of a suffering fellowcreature; he asks no questions, but instantly relieves his necessity, and so Paul, striving, as I believe he ever does, to follow his Master in all things, staved not to ask if 'a certain child' whom he found starving in soul and body in the wilderness of London belonged to this or that persuasion, if she were a Christian, or a heathen; what mattered it to him? was the lamb lost upon the mountains, and the Good Shepherd was waiting with outstretched Arms of Love to gather her into His Fold: she was the lost piece of silver, precious, real metal, remember, stamped with the Image of God, yet lost in the swamps and mire of sin; and Paul swept diligently till he found it; and so there was joy in Heaven among the angels. of God. Yet you tell me, among the Lord's people here on earth, the most worthy of whom are at the best but unprofitable servants, instead

of joy there was disapproval and condemnation of Paul's conduct. To him, it is of little concern what people say; his labour of love is very precious in the sight of his God, that is enough for a faithful servant; but to them it is a matter of great moment: God does not judge as man does, sad for us all if He did, and sad indeed for these people who call themselves the Lord's if they wander so far from the footsteps of the Master they profess to love."

Patty sat abashed under this rebuke of the Rector: he was a wise and good man, she knew, and well fitted for the duties of his office, and he had laid before her the plain state of things, and it looked unpleasant, to say the least; for in the vivid picture he had drawn, Paul was the Samaritan, worthy of all praise from men and angels; she was the priest, or the Levite, and so standing out in the cold, away, far away from her LORD's Love, with only the hollow voices of the world approving her lack of charity. But the child's eyes were glistening as the Rector talked; these new revelations of the compassion of Divine Love were exceeding beautiful to hear, so her work fell on her lap, and her hands folded themselves together, as she listened with rapt attention. The Rector

noticed this, and after a few minutes' silence, addressed her in a gentle tone.

"Do you think you understand," he asked, "what is meant by bringing you to the Church to be baptized?"

The girl did not answer at once, though there was no hesitation in her manner when she did speak.

"I think I do," she replied, "he's told me a deal about it; I'm to go there and say I'll have nothing to do with the Devil, and the World, and the Flesh, for they're terrible giants, always trying to keep us from the Pleasant Land: and I'm to believe that GoD is the Good FATHER in Heaven, and can do everything; and the LORD JESUS CHRIST is His Son, and is the same as God, and died for all the wicked people, and was put in a grave, and was only there a little while, and then rose out of it and went up into Heaven to live with His FATHER for ever, and to pray to Him for the wicked people, and some day He will come again to judge the wicked people. And then He and the FATHER sent their Spirit down into people's hearts who wanted to be called after the Saviour's name: so God is always with us, and when we are made His children we don't belong to ourselves any more,

and can't do as we like, and we must forgive everybody, because GoD has forgiven us so much, and—and—I think that is all."

"My child," said the Rector, who was much delighted at the girl's earnestness, "you know much, very much of the Holy Faith,—quite enough for you to come to the Church and receive your Christian name, but you do not know all,—you have much yet to learn."

"I meant," replied the child, "that was all he's taught me."

"I see, I see," returned the Rector; "well, you have learnt much, and understand it well. Have you been thinking of the name you would like to have?"

The girl's face flushed. "Yes," she replied, in a quiet tone, "Mary."

"Why Mary?" asked the Rector.

"Mary the mother of Jesus," returned the child, looking beyond him up into the blue sky, and speaking in a tone as though talking to herself. "I'd like to be called by her name, it seems close to Him, the Saviour, I mean; and besides, it was the name of the little girl that the clergyman in London spoke so kind to."

"Ah, in some school-room," remarked the Rector; "Paul told me of that. Well, Mary is

a beautiful name, you could not have chosen better. I think we will appoint next Sunday, Mrs. Somers, for the baptism," he added, turning to Patty, "so perhaps you will tell your husband. I hope God will bless both him and you in the work you have undertaken; your reward is with Him. What the world says is of little moment: the world must pass away, but God's Word will ever remain, faithful and true to the end. Goodbye, my child, I shall see you again soon; good-bye, Mrs. Somers, I shall expect you on Sunday." So saying the Rector walked away up the winding lane.

"I am wondering," said Patty, after a little while, "what thou oughtest to call me and Paul; we have no children, and thou hast come to be our child. I think thou shouldst call us father and mother," (here Patty winced, for what the righteous people might think of her allowing an outcast to call her by such a sacred name, would steal into her mind,) "it will sound strange at first, but I think it is right, and I know Paul would like it. Dost think thou couldst say father and mother when thou speakest to us?"

Patty had fairly beaten off the giant this time, and felt the brighter for the victory, but though somewhat damped by the child's reply, she felt its truth.

- "I don't think I could call you mother," she said; "I don't love you yet,—I think I shall some day, but I don't yet. I love him, and I'd like to call him father if he'd let me."
- "I am sure he will," replied Patty; "and how dost thou like the Rector?"
- "Do you mean the gentleman who was here just now?" asked the child.
 - "Yes."
- "I think I like him a deal," she returned, "he told such beautiful things. I wish you'd take and read to me about that man the other was kind to,—what he talked about, you know,—he said it was in the Bible; I'd like to hear all about it."

So Patty took her Bible, and read of the "neighbour to him who fell among thieves," and wisely laid the lesson to heart, refraining from offering any remarks on the subject, or explanation of it, as was her wont, perhaps feeling just then that it would be safer to learn than to teach.



CHAPTER IX.

LIGHT IN THE DIALS.

M ORE than three months had passed away since the little outcast had become an inmate of Paul's home. It was now early autumn, and the winds were already keen and sharp, while over the fields, and along the pleasant Surrey lanes and roads, leaves were lying thick and scattered, withering and dead. The nameless child, snatched as a brand from the burning, was now a Christian, and called by the name she had chosen—Mary. Paul and Patty were her sponsors, with neighbour Gray, who had voluntarily offered to be godmother to the friendless girl.

She was happy now, this poor child, at least every one who saw her, except Paul, thought so; but she had a secret trouble which, whatever it might have been to any one else, was to her great and heavy. Always quick and helpful in household duties, willing with almost a painful anxiety to do anything required of her by either Paul or Patty, it quite escaped the observation of the latter that there was something on the child's mind. But one evening towards the end of October, when the first frost was lying thick on the outside world, and the three inmates of the cottage were enjoying their evening meal by the side of a cheery fire, the trouble lay so heavy on little Mary's soul, that she put aside her food, and great heavy tears came slowly into her eyes.

"Mary," said Paul gently, "thou hast something on thy mind that thou shouldst tell us, thou'rt either sick in body, or sick at heart; thou knowest, if we can, we will do thee good, so keep thy trouble no longer to thyself, child, but tell it to us for thine own good."

Thus encouraged, the child endeavoured to explain, but the floodgates once opened, the tears would fall first. At last she said,

"It's Wild Peggy I'm always thinking about, —Peggy up in the Dials, with no food, and no fire, and the cold winter."

Patty was silent, she waited to hear more; she was rather sorry than otherwise that this

living link with an unpleasant past was still remembered so vividly by her adopted child, for, from all accounts, Peggy must have been a most depraved character, and altogether hopeless. But Paul's mind was set at rest on a point that had much troubled him; he was satisfied now that the girl had a really grateful heart, when she could remember with such evident feeling in her prosperity the miserable, fighting, thieving beggar, Wild Peggy, who had sometimes fed her and helped her; so he said,

"It glads me, Mary, glads me to the heart, that thou hast spoken out thy grief; often have I wondered if thou hast ever thought of that poor and erring creature, for as thou hast said, she used to be kind to thee when thou hadst no other friend on earth, and gave thee food when thou wast starving, and now thou hast enough and more to satisfy thy need, and thinkest of her with a grateful heart."

"That isn't all I think about her," interrupted the child, "I can't help remembering all the cruel words I said to her the day father was buried, the day I came here, and she was very kind, she gave me her mat to sit on in the only shady corner of her room, and she sat in the sun to make up her matches, and the day was very hot. I told her I wished I had something to kill her with just as she sat there, and I was sorry I'd ever eaten her food, or slept on her mat, because I hated her; but the worst thing of all was, I said I would find the Way to the Pleasant Land somehow, but I would never, never tell her; and now I want her to know all about it," added the child in a choking voice; "I feel sometimes as if I couldn't go on any further till I've told Peggy, because sometimes I dream she's moaning and crying to find the Way, and can't."

"And why?" asked Patty, who had become really interested in the child's regrets; "didst thou say all these cruel things to the poor woman? thou must have been very angry; what had she said or done to make thee so?"

"A clergyman had come the night before when I was away at father's grave," replied Mary, "to tell me the Way to the Pleasant Land, and she had sent him away with rude and unkind words, and wouldn't let him speak at all, and shut the door in his face; and when she told me about it I was very angry, and said the cruel words I told you just now, because I thought I should never be able to find the Way after what she had done."

"And now thou art sorry," said Paul gently, "and would like Peggy to know all about the Pleasant Land: well, thou art right, very right; the 'good tidings of great joy' were sent to all people, to Peggy as well as to all of us here; let thy heart be cheered, Mary, thou shalt go to London with me to-morrow, and together we will try and find the poor soul: Patty, thou canst spare the child, I hope?"

"Yes," responded his wife, who rarely opposed her husband's will or wishes in anything, though she thought it wise to add in the present instance, "I trust thou wilt not let her join or speak with any who have known her in the past, excepting this poor woman; I like not much the thought of her going back to those scenes of sin, but what thou sayest is right, she ought to go, and thou wilt be with her, and the Great God also, therefore we must not fear."

And so it was arranged that night to the satisfaction and happiness of the child that next morning, the weather being fine, she and Paul should set out on their pilgrimage to Seven Dials, in search of that degraded being who had drifted so far away from the pale of social life as no longer to be recognised as one of its members, Wild Peggy.

The day had approached very near noon when Paul having deposited all his parcels and different charges safely, put up his horse and cart at the usual place in Oxford Street, and taking Mary by the hand walked through Soho to that terrible locality of sin, and sorrow, and shame, known as Seven Dials.

Many times did the child tighten her hold of Paul's protecting hand, as together they threaded the dark and dirty well-remembered alleys, for every now and then faces appeared before her, and passed her, and looked back, faces that she recognised only too well, and which she could not help fancying recognised her, though it is possible they did not, and only stared at the phenomenon of two respectable people, not being clergymen, missionaries, or women on errands of mercy, appearing in their wretched midst, and not seemingly anxious to get out of it.

At last they found the old, smoke-begrimed, rickety house at the top of a blind court, from which the child four months before had fled in her sudden rage.

A man more than half-stupid with drink was lying across the doorway on the broken step, and it required all Paul's bodily strength, as well as persuasion to induce him to move so far as to allow of their passing up-stairs. Fresh difficulties, however, awaited them, the juvenile occupants of each floor swarmed the landings at their approach, and on inquiries being made as to whether Wild Peggy still lived in the top backattic, the answers received were so interwoven with oaths and abuse that it was impossible to arrive at any reasonable conclusion on the matter.

At last, after many repulses, they reached the door of the wretched den allotted by poverty, and sin, and neglect, to a human being.

The child hesitated a moment or two before, at Paul's bidding, she knocked for admittance, and when at last she did, a low moan like one of pain was the only reply she received.

"We'd better go in," said Paul; "thou shouldst go first, and gently, for the poor soul may be in great suffering."

Mary obeyed, and to her great surprise found some slight changes made in the place. In the broken fireplace stood a small but new grate, but it was perfectly empty, and there seemed no trace of coals anywhere to be seen; where the heap of dirty straw used to lie, which formerly composed Peggy's bed, were now a mattress, a pillow, and a blanket, and on the mattress was lying a thin, shrunken old woman, shaking all over as if with cold, but which the child could still recognise as Wild Peggy.

"Who is it, who is it?" she asked, in a whining, peevish voice; "why don't you say who you are, and what you want?"

The child tried to say something, but the words only died away in a kind of murmur.

"I can't see you," moaned Peggy; "why don't you come closer, and tell me who you are?"

Paul came in now, and closed the door, motioning with his hand for Mary to go nearer to the sick woman's bed.

She did so, and sat down on a low stool she found beside it.

- "Don't you remember me?" she asked in a very low tone, but not daring to look at Peggy.
- "I knows yer voice," replied the woman, struggling to raise herself on her elbow, and succeeding in the effort, peering close into the girl's face; "why, and I believes I know yer outright now, for all yer bein' so neat and 'spectable like; it's little Light-Fingers, ain't it? Why, lor, I thought as you warn't a-comin' nigh me no more?"

"I've come to tell you," said the child, striving to speak without emotion, for the appellation by which Peggy had established her identity in her own mind, had roused many and painful recollections; "I've come to tell you how sorry I am for saying all those cruel things to you the day they buried father, I was very wicked to say them, and I'm very sorry."

"Lor," said Peggy, "I'm sorry too; I've been sorry o' nights most, spec'ally since the weather's turned so cold, and I didn't know where you was; I know'd you wasn't in that Pleasant Land as you talked on, 'cos I've heard summut about that place lately; but where ever 'ave you been?" continued Peggy curiously; "you ain't been stealin' by the look on yer, you don't look like a jail-bird anyhows."

"Oh, no," replied Mary, "I've been very happy; I've a beautiful home, and a father, and mother, and everything I want; and now I've got a name too, they call me Mary; and I can read, and write a little."

"And now, I s'pose," interrupted Peggy, "you've give up all thought o' t'other place, that Pleasant Land where they gives away them good things, better things nor loaves and fishes; lor," added the sick woman with energy, "if I warn't in sich awful pain I'd tell 'ee what they gives away up there; my! what a place it must be."

The child looked from Peggy to Paul, and then back again.

"How have you heard anything about it?" she asked in great astonishment.

"Oh," groaned Peggy, "oh, I'm in sich pain; but there, somehows I'll try and tell yer; but lor, how proper you speaks, a'most like schoolpeople; is that yer new father over there? he looks nice too, don't he; kind, eh? Well, now I'll tell ver how it was I heerd; you was gone about a for night when I took a awful fever and hagy (ague); I couldn't get out to get no food nor steal nothin' nohows, so I lays and howls, and groans on the old heap o' straw nigh on three days, and no soul come a-nigh me. One night when I was most burnt up with the fever and the hawful 'eat, I see the door a-hopenin' and a face looks in; so I says to the face, 'Ah, you may look, I ain't got no strength now to slam the door on yer;' 'cos I see at once it was the fine gentleman as had come to tell you the way to the Pleasant Land; so he comes right into the room and shuts the door hisself, so gentle like, and he spoke so soft. He says, 'You seems very bad, my poor woman, very bad, you do;' so I says, 'I am bad just;' then he says, 'Ain't you got no friends?' and I laughs when he said 'friends;' 'Lor,' says I, 'I never heerd o' such people.' He looked so sorry when I said that; then says he, 'I'm afraid you're goin' to have a bad fever;' 'I think I've got it,' says I. Then he looks round the room, and shook his head, and seemed awful sorry; and then he doesn't say nothin', but goes out and shuts the door. 'That's yer fine folk,' says I to myself, and I laughs bitter; then it all come dark, I couldn't see nothin', then I laughs agin, and shivered and shaked, lor, awful, then I was all burnin' up agin, and tried to get up and run about, but it warn't no good, it came on darker and darker, till I don't remember nothin' more."

"How bad you must have been," remarked Mary with much compassion.

Paul listened with wonderful interest to this recital.

"When it got lighter," resumed Peggy, "I didn't know where I was; my! what a place I was in! beds, and food, and people to nuss yer, and kind folk all round; it warn't a big place neither, it warn't no 'orspital, summut o' the

same sort, I s'pose, only small like, very small, and soon as I know'd a little where I was, the gentleman come to see me, and he says, 'I'm so glad, my poor soul, as you're better, so glad.' I says to him, 'How ever does I come here, and what's been the matter? I ain't been took to jail. I know, it's a sight better 'an that:' so he says, 'No; you was very bad with a fever up in your room, and I had you brought here to be took care on, and try to make ver well; there's been hawful fever about your part this summer, so a friend o' mine, a young doctor, has took this house, and takes as many poor people as he can to try and cure 'em, and kind people gives him and me money, and we does all we can.' Then I says, 'Well, you must be a kind sort, for I dessay you gives all you've got of yer own too;' and a woman calls out from another bed, 'Yes, yes, he do,' and then the gentleman he colours up, and says as how what he give warn't his but God's, and then arter that he went on to talk o' the Pleasant Land,-that's how I comed to know about it; and he asked about you, he did, and I think he didn't like to hear you'd runned away, 'cos he said he'd got to write about yer to a clergy friend o' his over the sea somewheres; I used to feel so sorry I'd

spoke so rude to him, and slammed the door in his face, and every day when he come nigh I says, 'I hope you'll forgive me, sir, I do hope you will,' and he smiled so cheery like, and he says always, 'Oh, yes, Peggy, yes.'"

Here the sick woman, who had been many times interrupted during her recital by a distressing cough, sank back exhausted by her volubility.

"I am afraid," said Paul kindly, "thou hast been talking too much, I am afraid thou art very far from being strong yet."

Peggy moaned, and shook her head. "I'm dying," she replied with real earnestness, "that's just what it is."

Mary looked into Paul's face for a confirmation of these words; he looked very grave, but avoided meeting her eyes.

"I tell yer how I knows it," resumed Peggy; "the doctor as was at that place where I was took, the kind gentleman's friend, he told me as how I should never get well no more; he said I'd had the fever dreadful bad, and it had left summut as 'ud kill me. He told it so kind though, and spoke so beautiful of Him up there," (here Peggy pointed to the sky,) "said as how He cured all pain. Then I says, 'Sir, am I to

die here?' and he says, 'Only God knows that, Peggy, but I hope not.' I think it was just a week arterwards when he comed one mornin' to my bed, and he says, 'Our kind friend's gone Home, Peggy; he's been took sudden by God. he's worked too hard about the fever, and caught it awful bad: we mustn't be too sorry. Peggy. God knows best. He can't do wrong, can't never make no mistake.' They was beautiful words; I laid and thought on 'em hours and hours, I often thinks on 'em now when I'm afraid to die. First I gets frightened about all the wicked things as I've done, then I thinks o' all the promises God's made, as the gentleman used to read to me of; then I says to myself the doctor's words, 'He can't make no mistake.'"

"But how is it," asked Paul kindly, "how is it that thou hast left that nice place, and come to this cheerless room?"

"I was 'bliged to leave it," replied Peggy, "there was so many waitin' to go, bad with the fever; but the young doctor comes to me, and he says, 'Peggy, I've had your room put a little more comfortable, I promised my poor friend I'd see after yer, and when you gets there I'll come and see you sometimes;' and so he did, comed reg'lar, tho' I knows he was hard drove.

and he give me money to get food, he did; but he ain't been near me nigh on a month now, and I fancies he won't come no more, 'cos the last time I see him he looked awful bad, and said as how he thought he'd got the fever, and I thinks he had, and I believes as he's dead, same as his friend."

"I am sore grieved to hear this," replied Paul compassionately; "thou hast lost two blessed friends; I fear it must be as thou thinkest about the doctor; but if thou wouldst like, I will ask for thee, if thou canst tell me where to find the house."

"Well, thank'ee," said Peggy, "that's real kind; it's right up 'Ampstead way somewheres, close on the fields, but I can't say exact wheres."

"I will try my best," returned Paul; "but how hast thou fared,—what hast thou done for food and fire since it pleased the Dear God to call His labourers Home?"

"I ain't had much," rejoined Peggy, "I ain't had but very little; no fire at all; I've been out a beggin' when I can just crawl, but I never steals now,—I'll never steal nor do nothin' bad no more."

Mary and Paul smiled brightly into each

other's faces at these words,—glad news to take home to Patty, they both thought.

"We've both been took care on, ain't we?" said Peggy, after a little breathing time; "both on us had wonnerful friends, me and this little un, I means; I often wondered where ever you runned to that day, and now I don't know."

Then Mary and Paul related all that had occurred in the cemetery and afterwards, and Peggy listened with the greatest wonderment, taking especial interest in the baptism of the child, who she declared "never had no name before."

"I've knowed her ever since she was born,' remarked Peggy; "she didn't belong to such as was give to thinkin' or doin' them sort o' things."

When they had brought the recital to a close Paul said,

"And now I will leave Mary with thee just half-an-hour,—I've some business I must see after before I leave London, and she may like to tell thee of her new life."

So he went, leaving them both quite unsuspicious of what the nature of this business might be, though they were not long in the dark, as in much less than the time mentioned he returned with sufficient necessaries for two or three days, and himself making up a bright little fire, he told Mary to make Peggy a cup of good tea; and after arranging her bed a little more comfortably for the night, they at last took their leave with the faithful promise that in a week at the most, possibly less, they would come to see her again, and Paul resolved it should be very soon, for he knew Peggy's days were numbered.



CHAPTER X.

A GIANT SLAIN.

VERY quiet was Patty that same night when, after supper was over, and everything cleared away, they all gathered round the bright log fire, she to listen, and Paul and Mary to tell of the wonderful dealings of a Gracious God to poor, sinful Peggy up in the Dials.

"Truly," added Paul, at the conclusion of the recital, "His ways are past finding out; for years and years this poor soul has lived a life of sin and misery, neglected by her fellow-creatures, nay more, shunned and abhorred by them, yet the Eye of God was on her always, for He knew the end from the beginning. Who shall say what a kind word might have done for Peggy, if it had been spoken years ago? what a tender, pitying, loving creature a little human

sympathy might have made her, in the time that has gone! Perhaps people that have had to deal with her sins and shortcomings heretofore, have seen only in the FATHER of Mercy a God of Justice; may be they haven't thought of the Story of the Cross, of the CHRIST Who came to seek and to save the Peters, and Marys, and Davids, and dying thieves still among us; but these two excellent gentlemen, Peggy's helpers in her terrible need,-whose names we may humbly hope are written in heaven,—they served the God of Love; they saw in Him David's God, the Compassionate Redeemer of one who had fallen almost if not quite as low as it is possible for human nature to fall. It would be well for all of us-for all who are called Christians—to think more of our Saviour than is our custom as David's Gop."

Why did the bright log fire, with its cheery flames, and brisk crackling, look so dim and far off to Patty, as though she saw it through a mist? Why did she rise, and bring fresh fuel to the glowing hearth, and rub her eyes as if they smarted with the outside frost? She had become convinced during the recital of Peggy's history, and her husband's remarks upon it, that she, one of the LORD's people, one of the re-

deemed, had never worshipped David's God; she had served the Almighty, the Just, the Great, the Good, but not the Merciful Long-suffering Christ Who, when David was lost on the mountains of sin, followed him with unwearied love, and finding him, brought him home, rejoicing. So Patty was quiet, silently praying for strength to slay the giant that had stood so long in her path, whilst Paul talked on.

"That was a blessed thought," he continued. "a blessed thought for those good people to have about providing a home for their poor brethren sick of the fever; how full was Peggy's story of the mercies, and gifts, and blessings of the Gracious God, how far they outweighed the miseries even of her present existence, because, like the rest of us, she deserves the miseries, and like us too, is altogether unworthy of the very least blessing, but GoD has seen fit to send her many; above all, He has bestowed on her the blessed-grace of repentance. I fear, nay, I am sure, that she will not have opportunity to prove the sincerity of it by an altered way of living, for her time on earth is short; but God can see her heart; He knows what is there. He knows the course she would pursue if He saw fit to

lengthen her days, as He did those of King Hezekiah. He knows too whether her soul on the day she dies will be with Him in Paradise or not; we know nothing, but we hope, and pray, and trust, and remember the dying thief, for God knew what a repentance his would be, were longer time allowed, so we may safely trust Peggy in such Precious Keeping, for He never yet broke the bruised reed, nor quenched the smoking flax."

"Is the poor soul quite alone?" asked Patty in a low, yet compassionate tone.

"Quite," answered Mary and Paul together; and then the former added, "she said she would rather be alone than have the people she used to swear and fight with come about her; she doesn't hate them, you know, but she doesn't want to hear the dreadful things they say; she likes to be alone best, and think of what the gentleman used to read; he was a clergyman, she said."

Patty sighed. "I suppose, Paul," she remarked, after a while, "thou wilt try and see if that kind doctor is dead or not?"

"Indeed," replied Paul, "that will be my first endeavour. To-morrow I shall ask the Rector if he hath heard of this home for the

sick. I have little doubt but that he hath, and then when next I go to town I shall make my way to the spot, and ask all questions. But I am sorely troubled, Patty, as to whether we ought not to let our Mary go, and nurse poor Peggy in her death sickness; yet I like not one so young to have a charge so grave; and besides, she hath walked but a little on the Way to the Pleasant Land, and old scenes and old temptations might prove too much for so young a soldier of the Cross, therefore I am sorely troubled."

"But I would like to go," said Mary, "if you will let me. I would pray to GoD always to keep me safe; I shouldn't like Peggy to die alone."

Paul looked earnestly at Patty, as if to read her thoughts on the subject. She gravely shook her head as she replied,

"No, Paul, we must not let her go; I am quite sure of that. We must think what best can be done for this poor woman, but we must not cast Mary back into the furnace from which God has rescued her; I am quite sure I am right, Paul, quite sure."

And when Paul had sat a little longer by the fire, and thought the matter well over, he agreed

entirely with his wife; Mary must go no more to Seven Dials.

If Patty had been unusually quiet on this evening we have just noted, she was very much more so during the day that followed. She was revolving something in her mind, and fighting valiantly with the great enemy of her soul, and striving to forget the Lord's people, and to think only of the Lord Himself; and she grew faint and weary in the conflict, and would fain have given it up, but a Voice was sounding in her ear all day long, high above the busy clatter of her daily work, clear and distinct in the pauses of it, and the Voice was ever saying these words: "I was a stranger, and ye took Me in; I was sick, and ye visited Me."

Deep into Patty's soul they sank in all their powerful meaning, and when the evening shadows had crept round her home, and her hearth was bright again with the log fire and contented faces of Mary and her husband, the cloud passed off from her brow, and a sweet sense of satisfaction filled all her being, for in the Strength of the Living God she had that day slain the great enemy of her salvation,—the giant called Self-Righteousness.

Fair blossoms might grow on the pathway

now leading to Life Eternal, of which she would gather the fruits when the LORD of the Vineyard should come; for the foul weed that had overrun the garden of her soul was torn up and cast away.

So they talked pleasantly by the fireside of what Paul should do on the following day, and planning some comforts to be taken to Peggy. The Rector had seen a notice some weeks before in the "Times," he had said, "of a home for poor fever-stricken outcasts of the Dials; and he also remembered it was at Hampstead, but could not say exactly whether near the Heath or not."

"But," said Paul, by his fireside, "I little doubt but I shall find it; there'll be many to tell me of such a blessed place, for it must have had the prayers of God's children round about."

Simple Paul, filled with the "long-suffering" charity that is "kind," and "thinketh no evil," that "hopeth all things," and "never faileth," would that more were like thee in this evil world.

The morrow's sun rose bright and clear; though long before, in the early grey twilight, the stout horse had been harnessed by Paul, and he and Patty were busy lading the cart with cushions, and cloaks, and wraps of all sorts, much to Mary's amazement, which was considerably increased when, breakfast being over, Patty appeared on the scene dressed in her comfortable winter bonnet and shawl, a small basket of provisions in her hand, and a pleasant determination on her countenance. In every way it was evident she was prepared for a journey. And Paul seemed to know all about it too-took it quite as a matter of course, or pretended to do so,-Mary could not quite make out which, only she was sure he was very happy. Then Patty proceeded to give her directions about what she should do in household work during her absence, and that she was to say no more to curious inquirers than that she (Patty) had gone to London to see a sick friend; "for thou must know," she added, "that I am going to see what I can do for this poor woman Peggy, and I hope I shall bring thee good tidings of her safe keeping, for it grieves me sore that she should be alone in that drear place; therefore thou must not fret whilst we are gone, but make thyself busy, and trust in the LORD, so the time will pass quickly, and it will be well with thee."

Then she got into the cart and drove off with Paul, and Mary stood at the wicket gate and watched them down the winding lane until they were lost to view, when she remembered with unavailing regret that in her bewilderment she had quite forgotten to send a message to Peggy. But we must leave the child with her regrets, and vain endeavours to understand the change in Patty's ideas about unrighteous people, and follow the horse and cart with its freight of Samaritans, journeying towards that drear spot in the Great City where, by Life's wayside, Peggy had fallen among thieves.

"Our home is very fair," said Patty, after they had travelled a little way in silence, and she had been earnestly regarding the scenery around; "truly may it be said of us that our lines have fallen in pleasant places; why hath the Lord been so good to me, Paul? why hath He not rather smitten me for my cold, unloving heart, that hath never heard before His cries from the prison, and the sick, and the fatherless, and the stranger? why hath He not taken me from thee and given thee another wife, who would have worked better in His vineyard than I have done, and have been more a helpmeet for thee on thy heavenward way; why not, Paul?"

"Hush," he returned solemnly; "we must not question the ways of God, even in condemning ourselves; thy heart was not unloving, Patty; thou hadst allowed the evil giant Pride to seal it up, and roll great stones against it, but Christ, Who broke the bonds of an earthly grave, hath also broken those of the grave of thy heart, and now He hath risen like the Day-Star in thy soul; and if thou lookest into that sepulchre once so dark, and cold, thou wilt doubtless find there are angels sitting at the head and the feet where thou didst allow thy dead Lord to lie so long."

"Thou givest me great comfort, Paul," replied his wife; "and all that thou sayest is ever good and true, but I cannot fail to see how wicked I have been, and to grieve sore for my want of love."

"And the more thou grievest," returned Paul, "the more of that most blessed grace thou wilt obtain, and having that, thou wilt surely possess all things; for as the good Bishop Jeremy Taylor¹ hath written, 'Love is the greatest thing that God can give us; for Himself is Love: and it is the greatest thing we can give to God; for it will also give ourselves, and carry with it all that is ours.' It is all the Commandments in one—it

¹ Holy Living. Chap. IV. Sect. III.

is God, and Heaven, and all that is true and beautiful; and I humbly thank the Good Above that He hath at last given thee this armour for the battle, for the fiery darts of the Evil One have never yet pierced the Shield of Love."

With such pleasant talk as this, they journeyed on their errand of mercy. Patty's spirit rising and warming to her work the nearer they approached London: but when the horse and cart had reached their destination, were put up for a few hours, all matters of business transacted, and she and Paul had left Life, as she had hitherto known it, behind them in the great squares and thoroughfares, the country roads, and smiling villages, and came upon Life as it is understood in the Dials, more like a hideous, galvanized Death, her soul sank within her, her heart turned faint, she would fain have cried out, "Paul, take me back. I have not courage for this work," but the Voice of yesterday seemed to wail past her on the autumn wind; "should she refuse the LORD Himself pleading for His forsaken and desolate?" and "about what was Paul thinking as he beheld the drear misery around him?"

She looked up into his face. He was not oblivious of the scene passing before him; he was not thinking of himself as she was; his fine sensibilities instead of being struck with horror and disgust, were keenly touched by the evidences of suffering humanity around him, and compassion, and love, and sympathy were shining in his countenance like lamps in a pleasant city. Patty felt as she looked at her husband that she could not take that joy from him, that rather, cost her what it may, she would try to be a sharer in it; so listening to the Voice, and looking at him, they at last arrived in Peggy's attic room.

She was lying very still on her bed as they entered, so still, that at first they almost thought she was dead; but on their approaching nearer, she slowly raised her heavy eyelids, and on recognizing Paul faintly smiled.

"How art thou, my poor soul?" he asked kindly.

Peggy tried another smile, but failed.

"I'm worser, thankee," she said feebly; "a deal worser nor I was."

And it needed but very little observation to know that these words were true.

- "Hast been quite alone since I saw thee last?" asked Paul.
- "Quite," answered Peggy; "nobody ain't been nigh."
 - "I have brought my wife to see thee," he

said, after a few moments; "she hath brought thee something nourishing, which I trust will do thee good."

"You's very kind," said Peggy, gratefully; "very kind you is."

"I will give thee some at once," said Patty; opening her basket and taking out a delicate piece of chicken, which she had killed and cooked for the purpose the day before; "thou seemest to be much exhausted, and this, with a little wine, may do thee good. So let me feed thee, as thou liest there, and then thou wilt gain strength to listen to what I have to ask thee."

And Patty, in her pleasant task, forgot the squalor and wretchedness about her, the heavy, poisonous atmosphere, the low, ruinous room, darkened by the smoke of countless chimneys, and was more truly happy in her work of love and usefulness than ever she had been when wading in the shallow pools of self-righteousness with those who believed themselves to be the Lord's people.

Peggy was much revived after her unexpected repast, and expressed much satisfaction and gratitude for it, and by the help and support of Patty was enabled to sit up a little, and listen to the proposal she and Paul had to make to her.

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"Thou seest," began Patty, "until Gop sent Mary to us, a blessing for which I can never be too thankful," (how Paul rejoiced as he heard these words); "we had no one to share our home and our many mercies, and so we have saved a little money to support us, under God, in our old age. I tell thee this because I would not have thee think we were laying too great a burden on ourselves by asking thee to do what we want. We think thou wouldst be more comfortable in our home than here, and I would nurse thee. and Mary wait on thee, and Paul should read and tell of the Blessed CHRIST Who, like thee, was homeless and friendless; and if thou hast strength, and wilt go with us, we will take thee this very afternoon, for our cart is not far away. and we have brought cushions and wraps to make it easy and comfortable for thee, and now it only remains for thee to say if thou wilt come."

A light had been slowly breaking into Peggy's dim, dark eyes whilst Patty was speaking; she now stretched out her hands towards them both, and her voice trembled with joy and bodily weakness as she answered.

"You's very good, you's too good, Him Above 'll bless you for it, Him Above never forgets;

He's watchin' on us now, and blessin' too, so I'll go with ye, I'll go with ye if it's only just to die."

"And thou must go whilst thou hast strength," urged Paul; "so if Patty will help thee make ready, I will hasten to bring the horse and cart, and settle with thy landlord, if he is in the way. I must go to Hampstead another time; all we must think of now is to get thee home."

So Paul departed, and Patty hastened to prepare Peggy for her journey, and poor Peggy, whose household goods were few, and her stock of wearing apparel scanty in the extreme, was soon ready, and in less than an hour she was safely stowed in the cart, well wrapped up and protected from all cold and draught, and journeying out into the bright, open country to find a few fleeting hours of this world's ease and comfort with her late-found friends, and then a peaceful grave by their village church.

"Ah," she said, when late in the afternoon they stopped at a wayside inn to deliver some message and parcel, and Patty had raised her from her temporary couch to look out on the autumn-tinted woods and low, swelling downs; "ah, ain't that a sight, ain't it wonderful, it's nigh on fifty year or more since I seed a

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tree or a field all quite away from Lunnun as this; what a little un I was then, younger nor your Mary, and me and mother went a-gleanin' in the country, nigh to where her home were, I seems to see it now, and how good it all were, and the people as we went to see was so 'spectable like, and there was a Church as we went to, as I often thinks about now, and when we comed away me and mother cried, and well we might, for we never seed it no more."

Peggy was silent after this till they reached home, which was not until long after sundown, and the hunter's moon was high in the chilly, though clear autumn sky. As soon as they stopped at the cottage Patty could see through the uncurtained window the bright flames of the fire Mary had prepared for their comfort, and when the child came down to the gate to meet them, she gave her a warm kiss in acknowledgment of her thoughtfulness.

"And see," she said, "Mary; we have brought thy poor friend Peggy home with us, for she hath sore need of good nursing, and I thought thou wouldst like her to share thy room, and thou wilt wait on her, I know, and together we will do our best; so when thou hast greeted her, child, thou wilt do well to prepare the supper, for I think we shall all be the better for a hearty meal."

Mary spoke not a word, but hastily obeyed, whilst Paul and his wife brought Peggy in from the cart, and laid her near the fire on the old-fashioned sofa, which had not been moved out of its place for years, except for cleaning purposes.

Then the curtains were drawn, and the candles lighted, and Patty laid aside her bonnet and shawl, and proceeded to make Peggy comfortable, and to give her some refreshment, while Mary tried to rub some life into the cold, helpless hands. But as yet the child had not spoken, she was trying to comprehend, to work out in her own mind the cause or causes of this inexplicable change in Patty. To what was it owing? She was a Christian, a member of the true Church, a woman of the strictest morals. and irreproachable in the performance of her duty, yet all these virtues shrank into insignificance, paled visibly in the bright, new light in which she now stood.

Poor little Mary did not reason with herself in these words, nor did she know that Christianity—the Christianity that is respected and caressed by the world—is too often linked hand in hand with a cold, dead-heartedness, and it remained for her to be told that the torch of Divine Love alone could kindle a vivid life in these dry bones.

But, however Mary thought her subject out, she must have arrived at a happy result; and however much Patty had ignored any thought of reward for her act of mercy that day, she must have been very greatly delighted when the child in answer to a question on home matters that she put to her, said for the first time, "Yes, mother."

What a conqueror was this Love, Patty felt, how the barriers between her and this stranger child were at once removed when its genial warmth fell upon them, and how much she had lost in the past, and how much she should gain in the future!

So all went to rest that night in the Surrey village home, with grateful hearts; and Peggy dreamt of fifty years before, of the village Church, and golden harvest fields, of the gleaners, and the reapers with their sharp long scythes, and she awoke to find the Reaper whose name is Death not very far away.



CHAPTER XI.

GATHERED IN.

"YOU'S got a beautiful land here," said the dying woman next morning to Patty, as she lay back in the comfortable bed provided for her, catching every now and then through the bright, little lattice a glimpse of the wooded fields and lanes glowing in the late October sunshine; "you's got a land to thank the Good God for, I'm sure."

"Ay, that we have," replied Patty, "and we do thank Him humbly, I hope."

"You's got a blessed home," continued Peggy,
"a blessed home you's got; clothes, and food,
and firin', and everythin' as you wants, ain't
you?"

"Indeed I have," said Patty, "and I don't deserve anything."

"Him Above knows about that," rejoined Peggy; "you don't, and I don't."

"No," said Patty, "we can't judge; but I don't think I do."

"Then," remarked Peggy after a while, evidently bent on enumerating Patty's mercies and benefits, "you's got a husband as I never seed the like on afore; he's a wonnerful man, wonnerful; Him Above's been wery good to you, He has, wery good."

Perhaps, a week before, had such expressions as these been addressed to Patty, she would have resented them as impertinent remarks, implying that she neither appreciated nor deserved such good fortune as had fallen to her lot; but the last two or three days' experiences had wrought within her a very humble opinion of herself, so she meekly acquiesced in all Peggy chose to say.

"I's never had no home what's been nice," continued that poor creature; "I's never seen nothin' good up in them awful Dials; nothin' only swearin', and drinkin', and lyin', and stealin', and fightin', and I's been dreadful wicked, I have; I knows well enough where I ought to go, and where I should ha' gone, if Him Above hadn't sent arter me, and saved me; He's been

very good to you, missis, He has, but He's been a deal kinder to me, oh, a deal kinder."

After this she lay for a long time quiet, but began again when Paul (whose day it was to remain at home) came into the room and sat down by her bedside.

"I 'opes I ain't deceivin' of myself," she said, "I 'opes I ain't expectin' too much of Him Above? I feels afraid like sometimes, and thinks o' the man as the gentleman read on out o' the Bible, as went to the weddin', and the King told him as he hadn't got on no proper dress; I feels dreadful when I thinks o' God's sayin' I ain't fit for that Pleasant Land."

"But," said Paul gently, "the Blessed Christ can make thee fit; thou must cast thyself on Him alone, and thou must say, 'Lord, save me, I perish,' 'Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow;' and He will send a sure hope of salvation into thy fainting heart, and will wash thee in His Own Precious Blood until thou art indeed whiter than the whitest snow; and He can make thee stand sinless before Him, because He nailed all thy sins to His Cross when He died for thee: thou canst only lay thy sad life down at His Holy Feet in strong faith, and patient hope that at His Second Coming He will bid thee take

it again in joy and peace in His Everlasting Kingdom."

"Oh," cried Peggy, "I wish I'd had His Message a long time ago, I'd ha' tried to ha' done somethin' for Him then, but I can't now, I's a deal too ill."

"Thou canst love Him," said Paul, "thou canst pray to Him, and praise Him, and thank Him, and believe in all His promises, thou canst do as much for Him as He will expect of thee in thy helpless state; thou must not think of the Pitying God as a hard Master Who would measure His reward to thee by the work thou doest; I will therefore read to thee for thy comfort what the Blessed Christ Himself says upon this matter."

So Paul turned to his Bible and read the first sixteen verses of the 20th chapter of S. Matthew's Gospel, explaining each verse as he went on in his own simple way.

"Thus thou wilt see," he remarked, at the conclusion of his reading, "that the house-holder goes out at several different hours of the day to hire labourers into his vineyard; some go in early, some late; but when the toil is over, they all receive the same reward. Now it just means this. The householder is our LORD; the

market place, our own station or position in life, where we have been placed to do our proper work, and certainly not to be idle in serving our Gop: but He comes and finds us so, so tells us to go labour in His vineyard; in other words, to serve, and love, and adore Him in whatever work or burden He chooses to lay upon us. He comes early in life to some, and late to others, at different times to different people, as the householder came at different hours of the day: but He gives them all the same reward, —the salvation of their never dying souls, even as the lord of the vineyard gave to all his labourers the some amount of hire, a penny, though some had worked for him only one hour. Thou wilt see too how he (the goodman of the house) rebuked those who presumed to murmur at his paying the same sum to all. It may have been that those who went into the vineyard at the eleventh hour did more to please their master than others who had borne the burden and heat of the day; but this we are not told. rebukes them and says, 'Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?' And CHRIST savs the same: we are all His, and He can reward us as He pleases. He hath called thee at the eleventh hour, and told thee to go work in

His vineyard, and thou hast not refused His call, so we may safely trust that He will give thee thy hire, that is, save thy soul. I trust thou hast understood me?"

"Yes," replied Peggy, whose perceptions were always keen, "I understands; it's the willin' and lovin' 'art as Him Above likes best. The work ain't nothin' without we loves Him, though in course, if we loves, we does all we can, leastways we would if we could."

"Yes, that's just it," said Paul; "and now thou shouldst rest awhile, I think," (for strange changes every now and then came over Peggy's face,) "and think over all we have been saying, and let it comfort thy weary soul."

So Paul left her, and by-and-by she sank into a light slumber, which lasted some hours, Patty and Mary watching alternately by her side. When she awoke it was evening, and only the child was with her.

"I feels very low," said Peggy, "but I've been dreamin' wonnerful; I've been dreamin' o' what the master read so beautiful this mornin', and I thought I seed Someone all shinin' come to me, and He takes hold o' my hand, and He says I was quite safe with Him, because He died for me, on purpose to save me; then I know'd it

was Him Above. But oh," continued Peggy, in a hoarse whisper, "I feels very low, I wonders if I'm dyin'."

The child, half frightened, called to Patty, who at once came, and gave the poor sufferer some refreshment, which revived her a little; but her end was not far off, and Patty, perceiving this, sent Mary down stairs to tell Paul he had better come up at once. He came, and like his wife, saw that the last great change was close at hand. He sat down by her side, but she did not see him.

"King David," she murmured every half minute or so, "King David."

"What about King David?" asked Paul softly.

"What he said when he was very sorry; I wants to say it too; the gentleman was always a-sayin' it to me, 'cos I was wery sorry, like King David. Oh, I am sorry," moaned poor Peggy, "I am sorry for my wicked sins; but I ain't afraid somehows, 'cos Him Above says I ain't to be, and you tells me I ain't to be; but I'd like to say King David's words, please, master, if you remembers 'em."

Then Paul knelt down by Peggy's bedside, and solemnly repeated the fifty-first Psalm, solemnly and slowly, so that she could easily follow, which

she did pretty well—as well as her cough would permit her.

"Warn't King David awful wicked?" said Peggy presently, after a silence of some little length, "and didn't God love him? but do you think he was took to Heaven when he died, eh, master?"

"We hope so," replied Paul; "we are taught to believe so. David fell into many fearful sins, but through God's grace he repented of them, and meekly bore the punishments God saw fit to send upon him, therefore we may safely hope that David rests in the LORD."

By-and-by Peggy said again, "Where's the little un; I wants to tell her summut afore I go. Make her come close."

Mary drew very near, and took Peggy's hand. "Lookye," said the poor soul, with some effort, for her strength was rapidly failing, "lookye; somedays you'll have to die like me, and everybody; you may come to be an old 'oman like me, or you may be took wery soon; but mind you takes care and do all you can for Him Above, whiles you can work. It won't be no good, in course, unless you loves Him too, but you don't know what a deal I'd give, if I could just do summut for Him; and I 'opes as you'll be allers

good to the master and missis here, 'cos they've—been wonnerful—good to you,—and I 'opes—as you—and them,—and the kind gentleman,—and the doctor as was so good,—I 'opes all on yer will come and find me in the Pleasant Land."

"Amen," said Paul devoutly, bending his head; but he was startled by a cry from the child, and looking up, he saw that Peggy's earthly fetters were burst for ever—that she was lying "free among the dead."

For a few moments they all seemed stunned by the awfully sudden end of the poor soul; They had hoped to have had her amongst them a few days at the least, but it had been ordered otherwise, and though they mourned, they did not murmur. Paul told Mary to go down stairs, and in about half an hour he and Patty joined her, and they all gathered, at first silently, round the kitchen fire. Patty was the first to speak.

"I am sorely, sorely grieved," she said, "that she is taken from us so soon. I had hoped our good Rector would have seen her, and that she would have partaken of the Holy Supper of our Blessed LORD, before she had parted from us."

"Ah," replied Paul, with a heavy sigh, "I prayed for that most fervently—I prayed with an exceeding great longing; and the LORD hath

not seen fit to answer my prayer. He is All-Wise, He cannot err, so we must submit humbly to His decree."

"Do you think Peggy is gone to the Pleasant Land?" asked Mary; "do you think she knew the Way?"

"The LORD JESUS CHRIST is the Way," replied Paul. "Thou knowest He says of Himself, 'I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life;' I am sure Peggy loved the LORD'S CHRIST, therefore she knew the Way, and I think we may safely, though humbly, trust that she is gone to the Pleasant Land."

"I shall always be sorry," said poor Mary, the heavy tears falling slowly from her eyes, "that I said those cruel words to her,—that I'd find the Way out somehow, but I'd never tell her; and you see I never did; and if some one else hadn't, where would Peggy have been?"

"God chose to do His work in His Own way," returned Paul; "He had no need of thee; He hath no need of any of us. It pleaseth Him sometimes to make us instruments of His Will, and it delighteth Him to see us work for Him with all our heart and soul; but He can do without us, and this thought should ever keep us humble."

"But I am sure it was very wrong of me," urged Mary; "I am sure it was very cruel."

"Grieve not too much about it, my child," said Paul kindly, "thou hadst not the love of Christ in thy heart in those sad days; as soon as thou hadst, thy first thought was for Peggy, as thou well knowest, therefore thou must quiet thyself, and learn to think of her with gladness."

"And to-morrow," observed Patty, "thou must go with me to the churchyard, and thou shalt choose the spot thou wouldst like best for poor Peggy's grave; we must be very glad she will lie so near us; I wish, Paul," she continued, addressing her husband, "that thou couldst go too, but I know thou must be away betimes."

So a few days later Peggy was laid to rest near the village church, followed by the rescued child, and Paul and Patty, and her grave became in time the fairest spot in all the holy ground, for loving hands brought bright flowers to grow upon it, and the simple headstone told the passer by "Her end was peace."

Poor, travel-worn Peggy, with thy journey finished, what a contrast thy sin-dimmed life in the drear region of the Dials, to thy peaceful death and quiet grave among the Surrey hills.



CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

"I HAVE been gladdened," said Paul, a week or two later, as he sat at his evening meal after his journey home from Town; "I have been filled with joy this day by what I have heard and seen."

"Hast been to Hampstead then?" asked Patty, "and hast seen the hospital?"

"Yes," he replied, "and it is well I did go to-day, for the fever has abated, and next week the house will be closed. But a blessed work has been carried on there, the lady told me; many poor creatures have been saved both in body and soul, who must have perished in the wretched dens they called their homes. She remembered poor Peggy well, and all her sad story, which she had heard from the gentleman who had her taken there."

"What was Peggy's story?" asked Mary, interrupting.

"Her life of sin from day to day," replied Paul; "truly a sadder story no one can have, than one of sin: but I must tell thee of the doctor, who, as Peggy feared, took the fever very badly, and died in a few days. strange to us it seemeth, that these two good men, who gave all their means and time to ease the sufferings of their poorer brethren should be called away in the midst of their blessed work; but it was so, and the lady told me they were lying side by side in the same grave in the beautiful cemetery at Highgate, not very far away from the scene of their last labours; in life they had ever been much together, one, a physician to the soul; the other, to the body; and now in death they are not divided. I walked there, after I had thanked the lady for telling me so much that gladdened my heart, and showing me the house and the many comforts the sick people had. I found the grave as she had told me. with both their names on the same headstone, and this text from Holy Scripture below: 'Blessed are the dead which die in the LORD from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.' It was a fair sight, that grave, and I felt a solemn joy as I stood by it, that the

Gracious God had permitted us to have a little share in the work of these two 'just men,' whose 'spirits,' I trust, are now 'made perfect.'"

"And Peggy will see them again," cried Mary, with a bright smile. "Peggy will walk with them up and down in the streets of the Pleasant Land; you know she hoped so just before she died."

"Yes," said Paul, "and I trust it may please the Dear God to let us join them too; here they had no continuing city, but they sought One to come, the City not made with hands. Eternal in the Heavens; we must seek It too, and never for one moment forget that every inch of the narrow way leading unto that City must be fought over in the Strength of the Living God. Giant-slavers we must be all, if we would be receivers of the 'inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled,' if we would wear the white robes of the Saints, and bear the palm of victory. The world is very evil; day by day the enemies of our salvation. the giants who form the armies of the Devil, the World, and the Flesh, camp round about our hearts, as the Roman soldiers encompassed the walls of Jerusalem. The Holy City fell, for it had crucified its SAVIOUR, it had set aside His counsel, and would have none of His reproof;

and we shall fall too," added Paul with energy, "we shall fall into the nethermost Hell, as they fell into the most complete ruin, if by our sins we crucify the LORD afresh, and put Him to an open shame. We can do all this in our quiet home, thou knowest well, wife, and Mary too, and so we never need go far to find giants to slay; we have only to stand in that part of the Battle where the Great General has placed us, and fight manfully as good soldiers of the Cross. I do assure thee that these daily struggles and hand-to-hand conflicts, great and tedious as they are to us now, will all be as nothing, will be forgotten and lost in the Endless Bliss of the Long Hereafter."

Paul ceased; his face was radiant, as though some dim reflection of the Glory that shall be revealed had fallen on it, and made him beautiful; and Patty looked into that bright, good face, and thanked God with humble gratitude that her place in Life's Battle was by the side of so intrepid a soldier; and Mary looked into it too, and the dark, grim Past rose up for one moment before her, and down its drear streets she saw a child walking in rags and sin, homeless, friendless, hunger-stricken! but only for one moment; all that was gloomy must soon fade

before the brightness of that good face, and the wretched child was lost in the happy, well-fed, well-clothed girl, holding tightly Paul's hand between her own, and calling him father!

Shall we not leave them by their glowing hearth now that our story is told, and we would lay down our pen; shall we not leave them standing there as by the brightest camp-fire on the battle-plain of life, warriors in shining armour, resting a few brief moments on their march to the City of the King? or shall we look in on them again a few years later, see Paul and Patty older, grey, and otherwise more or less marked with the toil and the strife; Mary a young woman, with love, and truth, and goodness, looking out of her soft, round face and gentle eves, a wonderful blessing to her adopted parents, a bright example to the village maidens. Such she was when we saw her last among the wooded Surrey downs, such she is still, we have little doubt, and such may she ever be, we would earnestly pray, until she passes beyond the Hills of Time into her FATHER'S Home, the Pleasant Land.

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